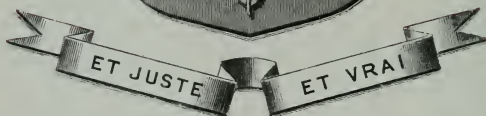




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THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

BY
MISS PARDOE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CITY OF THE SULTAN,"
"THE RIVER AND THE DESART," &c.

"'Mid many things most new to ear and eye,
The pilgrim rested here his weary feet,
And gazed around on Moslem luxury."

BYRON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

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THE
ROMANCE OF THE HAREM.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

IMMEDIATELY after the mid-day prayer, when the intense heat tempted a great portion of the inhabitants of the city to spend an hour in sleep, Maniolopolo, on the morrow of his visit to the Theriarki Tcharchi, again bent his steps thitherward, to seek an interview with the almè.

As he was rich and generous, he met with no opposition from the master of the tavern, who conducted him without comment to the door of an apartment which was veiled by a screen of dark-coloured baize; and here, having called

loudly on the name of Nevrestè, he left Maniolopolo standing, while he shuffled back to his rug in the public room.

A shrill and peevish voice was soon heard in reply ; and the slippers of a woman, hastily assumed, sounded upon the floor behind the screen, which was snatched aside, and the young Greek found himself confronted by an aged and wrinkled woman, whose mass of wiry hair checkered with gray had escaped from the confinement of a bright yellow handkerchief, painted in gaudy masses of colour, and flowed upon her shoulders ; her dress was of huge-patterned furniture chintz, girt round her waist with a well-worn cachemire, which had once been costly enough to cincture the loins of a Pasha ; her trowsers were of blue muslin, to which a few patches of tarnished foil yet adhered as if in mockery ; her legs were bare, and her whole appearance so compounded of meretriciousness and squalour, that Maniolopolo had some difficulty in subduing the sensation of disgust with which he looked on her.

“ Bè hey—What’s this ?” she asked sharply ;
“ Had we not enough of your loud brawling last night to bring down the Cadi and his gang upon us, and to keep us waking, that you return at

mid-day ? Go, go, Effendim, the almè sleep ; and they have need to do so, for they dance to-night in the harem of the Tchorbadji.”

“ I do not seek the almè ;” replied Maniopololo gently : “ it was yourself of whom I came in search.”

The crone laughed : “ Evallah — to be sure ! so says every young haramzadeh whom I find upon my threshold ; ‘ Mother, it is you I want ’ — but I have lived among the mountains, young sir, and can see beyond the flight of an arrow.”

“ May your eyes never fail !” whispered the Greek, as he pressed a gold coin against her open palm ; “ I come to seek that of you, in which, if they be not keen and quick, you will lack the power to serve me.”

“ And what wills my lord ?” asked Nevrestè more courteously, as she twisted her long hair once more beneath her head-kerchief, and tightened the shawl about her waist ; “ some rose-bud of a sheltered tree to which he would fain be the sunshine, to be told of his passion ; or——”

“ Ajaib — wonderful !” interposed Maniopololo, affecting surprise at her discernment.

“ You have indeed guessed my meaning,

mother — How say you ? will you undertake so sweet a mission ?”

The hag replied by grasping her throat with her skinny fingers, and nodding her head significantly.

“ Min Allah — Heaven forbid !” said the Greek ; “ you are too keen and quick-witted to incur so direful a penalty. Listen to me ;” and he enforced his request with a second piece of gold, which at once secured the attention of the old woman ; “ I have a sister, a slave in the Pasha’s harem——”

“ The Pasha’s harem !” broke in Nevrestè in affright ; “ and who am I that I should venture into the secret apartments of a Satrap, and carry a blight to his roses ?”

“ Nay, nay ; you talk idly ;” said Maniolopolo impatiently ; “ do I not tell you that I only seek to inform my sister of my vicinity — my young and innocent sister—the play-mate of my infancy, the delight of my boyhood, my bitterly-wept and regretted sister — my only one !”

“ Humph ! there is some reason in that, to be sure ;” muttered the old crone, while a shade of something which almost looked like feeling flitted over her brow, and then as suddenly dis-

appeared ; and left it cold and rigid, and stony as before, like the marble across which a struggling sunbeam has flickered for an instant ; “ I too had a brother once, an only one, as you say ; but he died — he was cut down by an Egyptian scymitar (may the arm be withered that wielded it !) and it was years ago, before I had forgotten how to weep ; and by the soul of your father, I shed tears enough ; but all that is gone by now, and I am the mother of a troop of almè, without a home, or a kinsman ; living among gibes and blows, and curses, with a scanty pillauf, and a tattered veil—but ey vah—mercy on us ! what dirt am I eating to talk thus ? The seal is set upon every man’s forehead at his birth, and as it was written, it will be. Bana bak—look at me, young sir ; do I not seem like one who can bear a heavy burthen yet without falling under it ?” And the bitter laugh with which she directed the attention of Maniolopolo to her squalid wretchedness rang painfully on his ear, as he attempted to murmur out some common-place about better days and a brighter fate.

“ Tush, tush ;” interposed the old woman with a wild smile ; “ string no fine sentences together to hang upon my rags ; foucaralk cha-numdr—poverty is my glory — You young bey-

zadehs know nothing of the gay immunity of poverty. It is your great men who are slaves; while we, the refuse of the city, the wanderers of the land, the outcasts of society, we are the free — no codgea-bashi lifts the latch of our dwellings to collect tribute; no latticed and bolted harem fetters our will; no saraf ever runs away with our hoarded gold; we come and go as we list; our teskara (passport) needs no signature but our own; and every hedge-side or empty tomb is a menzil khaneh (post-house) equal to our wants — So no more sugared words to Nevrestè, who is as much beyond the pity of every stranger with whom she comes in contact during her roving life, as she is indisposed to accept it. Gold! young sir; let your consolation be offered in gold — that is an universal language, never misunderstood. — And now to business: what would you ask of me?"

"My request is simple: I would see my sister, and I seek from you the opportunity of doing so."

"Mashallah! is that all? You would lift the screen, and tread the carpets of a Pasha's harem! You are mad, stark mad, the veriest delhibashi — prince of madmen, in the province. Have you no desire to wear a gray beard, that

you give the measure of your throat so early ? I will not work for your ruin, you are too young and too handsome for the bowstring."

"Allah Kerim—He is merciful ! "said Maniolopolo : " I trust in him."

"Allah ! Allah ! yes, yes;" replied the old crone peevishly ; " but let your words and your actions be alike reasonable — throw the mantle from your head, and see clearly for once ; and then I shall hear no more of the Pasha's harem."

"I am resolved;" said the young Greek moodily."

"And will you swear to this story of the sister?"

"I will."

"And her name is——?"

"Katinka;" replied Maniolopolo : "by birth a Sciote, but long dwelling in Circassia."

"What do you tell me !" exclaimed Nevrestè hastily ; "are you indeed the brother of the young Greek slave of whom I have heard so much—Ajaib—wonderful ! They say that she reads the Koran like a Moullah, writes verses which would not disgrace a Hafiz, sings like a bulbul, and dances like one of my own almè, —Young Sir, by the grave of your mother, is all this true?"

“All ;” said Maniolopolo ; “and she has moreover the warmest heart and the quickest wit in all Roum ;* and the brightest eye, and the lightest foot.—How say you ? Will you not assist me in looking on her once more ?”

“Ne apalum—what can I do ? I have received no summons from the Pasha ; and how may I present myself unbidden at the palace ?”

“Nay ! now you laugh at my beard ;” said the young Greek : “have you not in your band one of the loveliest houri out of Paradise ; and would not a hint to the Aga Baba——”

“Yavash, yavash—softly, softly, Effendim ;” interposed Nevrestè ; “I wish to draw the eyes of no Aga Baba in the country on the beautiful Mherpirwir ;† she is to me as the purple lily, a rare and precious thing ; and I love her like a mother — there is no maiden in the bright band so dear to me as Mherpirwir.”

“Did you call me, Mother ?” asked a sweet voice, as the coarse screen was drawn aside, and a face as fresh and fair as a May morning suddenly appeared behind it ; “I am here.”

“Nay, nay ;” said the old woman hastily but not unkindly ; “I want you not, kizem—my daughter ; I called you not ; is it ever thus with

* Turkey.

† Nurse of Love.

you — while the others sleep, you watch ; while the others idle, you toil for all. Go in, Mherpirwir, go in ; I have business with the Effendi, and shall be with you presently.”

The fair girl bent her head in token of obedience, but ere she retired, cast one hurried glance at the stranger ; their eyes met, and those of the young beauty fell before the earnest look of the Greek. With the instinctive tact of a woman she at once perceived how deeply Maniolopolo was impressed by her excelling loveliness, and she may well be pardoned if she lingered in her retreat.

The almè was about sixteen years of age, in all the glow and glory of a beauty such as is seldom looked upon. Her long dark hair fantastically braided with beads and ribbons, and intermixed with bright-coloured ribbons, fell almost to her feet, and was swept back from a brow of dazzling whiteness, surmounting eyes of intense light and lustre. Her figure was slight and graceful, and her expression soft and somewhat melancholy. To discover all this, one glance sufficed ; and had Maniolopolo been less preoccupied, and had the fair creature before him been other than she was—an almè—an out-cast — a wanderer among men, to whom her

beauty was a jest, and her youth a snare—he felt as though he could have sought a haven in her love, and a Paradise in her smiles.

The dark screen fell from her hand ; and as she disappeared, it seemed to the young Greek as though the light had suddenly failed. For a moment he stood silently gazing on the veiled portal through which she had passed, but only for a moment, for the voice of Nevrestè soon recalled him from his reverie.

“ Ay, ay, look your fill—her beauty may well fix the eye of a young gallant, whose heart, like the blossom of the rose-tree, opens to the first sunshine that flashes on it ; but you came not for this ; nor can you linger here all day to set the tongues of the whole city wagging on old Nevrestè and her troop of almè —Wallah ! You have seen her, and do you still talk to me of the Pasha and his Aga Baba ?”

“ Nay, chide me not, mother ;” said Maniopololo deprecatingly ; “ the Pasha has a fair young wife—as fair as Mherpirwir ; and it is said that he loves her as the men of this land seldom love a woman : he will look upon your houri only as a bright shape whose gracefulness can charm the eye of his young bride, and will pour gold into her lap, and forget her.”

The aged woman stood for a moment buried in thought, and then abruptly and steadily lifting her eyes to the excited countenance of her companion, she said slowly : “ Na to ne—there it is — at length I have read the dream, and the truth is in the hollow of my hand. Effendim, you love the Pasha’s wife !”

The address was so sudden and so unlooked-for that Maniolopolo was totally unprepared with a reply, and his confusion confirmed the wily and shrewd old woman in her suspicions. “ My son ;” she pursued gravely : “ I know not why I feel thus interested in your fortunes — I thought that my heart had long been seared, but now I see that it can yet beat even for a stranger—What are you about to dare ? Even were it the mere idle caprice of a young wild spirit which prompted you to put your head under the Pasha’s foot, you might well be prepared never again to lift it from the earth ; but if it be as I suspect—and I am one who has read for years the sable page of passion—that you are hurried on to ruin by a vision which never can be realized, ponder well your purpose ; for be assured that cunningly as you may hope to weave your web of wiles, that ruin will come at last.”

“ Hipsi birdir—so be it—It will be welcome, if the price must be paid ;” said Maniolopolo almost sternly.

“ And yet, you are young—and the grove shelters many birds of soft note and bright plumage, even if the bulbul be not there ;” urged Nevrestè.

The Greek smiled bitterly.

“ Pek ahi, dostoum — it is well, my friend ;” replied the old woman, who required no words to read his meaning ; “ And now, tell me ; wherefore should I risk the same ruin ?—you are a stranger : until last night I never looked upon you—and last night, how did we meet ? amid broil, and brawl, and intemperance, and riot : you will reply that my days are numbered, and that their remnant can be of little value, and I can pardon you the taunt, for you do not, you cannot know, in your bright years of strength and pride, how decaying nature clings to her ruined shrine, and hugs the fragments of her own beauty as they fall from her. It is strange that I waste so many words upon you — strange ! — but let us part now, and if you have parents in your own land who would weep over their lost son, go in peace, and forget the madness that has sprung up in your spirit.”

“ I have none to mourn me — none to weep for me ;” said the young man.

“ Away then, away — and be just to yourself — the bird that has no mate spreads a wider wing, and takes a bolder flight.”

“ You counsel me in vain ;” said Maniolopolo : “ the die is cast — derdunden olduin beigoud — my torment makes me mad ; forget your suspicions, mother : and remember that they are but suspicions — recall the days when you had a brother whom you loved ; and help me once more to look upon a sister who has been long lost to me.”

“ Delhibashi ! ” exclaimed Nevrestè impatiently ; “ what would you ask of me ? ”

“ Even to join your troop — I will wear any disguise — I will obey any behest — I will pay every effort which you make for me with gold. Nay, look not so scared, mother ; I am young, and your skill will surely suffice to make an almè of a sakal-siz.”*

The old woman stood lost in thought for a time, but at length she broke forth with an earnest : “ No, no — I cannot, I dare not—you know not what you ask ; are not the almè trained from childhood to their graceful trade ;

* Youth, literally “ no-beard.”

and would you cast dirt upon my head by betraying your madness to every looker-on? Did you not see Mherpirwir but a moment back? Would you stand beside her on the carpet of the Pasha, and hope to escape?"

"Not so, mother; I would be the massaldghi* of your troop; give me a veil and a turban, an Arab drum, and a heavy mantle; dye my hands with henna, and veil my shoulders with the flowing tresses of a young beauty; and while the almè repose between their dances, I will win the ear of the Pasha's harem with wild tales, and earn gold for you with a cunning tongue. Wallah billah! you shall carry a heavy purse when you leave the city. And here, jaguir benum — my guardian angel — here is wherewithal to provide for me such garments as you may deem fitting."

"Yavash, yavash — softly, softly, young man;" said Nevrestè; "I am not a lover, and I cannot travel so swiftly: but we will see what can be done;" and she deposited her new gains with the first offering of her companion in the folds of her tattered girdle; "Mherpirwir shall decide if we may venture our necks so near the grasp of the capidji-bashi; enter this room on

* Professional Story-teller.

the right, and I will come to you in a moment. I have already told you that we go to-night to the harem of the Tchorbadji ; and when the almè awaken, they will find plenty of employment in preparing for this visit."

Maniolopolo obeyed, and instantly found himself in a gloomy apartment, overstrorn with the paraphernalia of the Terpsichorean troop. There were bouquets of artificial flowers, most inartificially wrought, small citerns and guitars, and a sort of rude castanet of rosewood ; gaily coloured veils of gauze, girdles of cachemire, and slippers of velvet worked with gold and beads. A tambourine, fantastically ornamented with pendant ribbons, lay on the divan near the window ; and Maniolopolo amused himself during the absence of the old woman with this toylike instrument, which was familiar to his hand ; and, as he did so, his thoughts flew back to the happy time when, to its rattle, he had led the graceful romaïka, and taught the beautiful Carimfil to dream bright dreams of his lost and regretted land.

He was still absorbed in his occupation, when an astonished " Mashallah ! " sounded close beside him, and he perceived that Nevrestè and the young beauty had entered the apartment

unobserved, and were gazing on him with unfeigned gratification.

“ Why this is well, khatoun—my darling !” said the old woman ; “ You handle the tambourine like a high-priest of Anirān at the bridal of a Sultana ! How say you, Mherpirwir, my pearl ? If the veil and the antery become him like the instrument, may we not venture something to pleasure him ? ”

“ The Effendi is master ;” said the almè in a low sweet tone ; “ If he seeks my aid I am ready.”

“ May your beauty never decrease, janum — my soul !” exclaimed Maniolopolo ; for which wish he was recompensed by a deep blush, and a faint smile ; “ under your auspices I am sure of success — look you — should you need a minstrel to vary the charm of your gracefulness, I am your slave ;” and he seized one of the guitars, and sang in a sweet subdued voice a well-known fable, in the musical words of Hafiz :—

There was a bright and a sunny sky
Spread over a laughing land,
But one small vapour was floating by,
Where the wild wave kissed the strand ;
And as it passed o'er the ocean-swell,
A rain-drop from the dark cloud fell.

“ Alas !” the limpid moisture sighed,
As it clave the yielding air ;
“ And must I perish in that salt tide,
And die unregarded there ?
Hard is my fate to be thus riven
From my glorious place 'mid the blue of Heaven !”

Down, down it fell ; but ere the tide
Touched the bright sand of the shore,
An oyster that thirsted, opened wide
Its pearl-encrusted door ;
And by the soft breathing of the air,
The limpid drop was wafted there.

Time passed — and then a fisher came,
And from that oyster drew
A precious prize, whose wondrous fame
Through many a region flew ;
The rain-drop had become a gem,
To deck a monarch's diadem !

“ Or, should you not love the monotony of—”

“ Nay, say not so ;” interposed the almè
eagerly ; “ say not so—there is no maiden in the
band with such a voice — I will answer for you
with my head. Is it not so, mother ?”

“ Bakalum — we shall see :” answered Ne-
vrestè quietly ; “ put your veil upon the beyza-
deh, and let us see if he can teach those dark
eyes of his as much softness as he has taught his
tones. Hand hither those long tresses that Gu-
beïde has flung down so heedlessly in yonder

corner ; and bid Giadilla lend you her robe ; she is the tallest of the band—There, go, and be speedy in your return. And you, young sir,” she added, as the girl disappeared across the threshold ; “ look towards me, unless you are anxious to make a mirror of the screen, and thus delay your purpose by gazing after a vision that has vanished.”

With a silent smile Maniolopolo obeyed ; and on the return of the almè, the last touch was given to his costume, and the disguise declared to be perfect. Mherpirwir clasped her little hands in wonder, and whispered that he was a subject for the sunny foreground of a Benuzzeer ; but all the skill and patience of the fair girl failed to make the handsome young Greek move like an almè, and ultimately the attempt was abandoned in despair ; and it was decided that his guitar must be his dependence, coupled with his talents as a massaldjhi, of which they were content to accept his assurance.

The lovely Mherpirwir was zealous in her services ; she taught the new pupil a thousand little coquettish graces ; showed him the exact shade of the henna which must decorate his fingers, and the precise curve that he must give to his eyebrows ; laughed heartily at the languish-

ments by which he endeavoured to subdue the flashing of his dark eyes, and the mincing step, and unaccustomed slide of the embroidered slipper ; but occasionally she checked her mirth to bestow on him an encouraging smile, and a murmured word of approbation.

“ Mashallah ! you do credit, Effendim, to your Kaftandji ousta !* Fling your veil a little more lightly from your brow, and do not entangle the fringe of your sleeve in the buttons of your antery. It would be well too if you did not carry your head quite so high ; remember that you are but an awali,† and that you must be humble and modest when you tread the carpets of the great. Look you, mother, how well the beyzadeh comprehends my meaning ; and how thoroughly he reads his lesson.”

“ Allemdullilah ! the risk can be but slight :” replied the old woman ; “ if he will promise to be prudent ; and he will do well to join us to-night when we visit the ladies of the Tchorbadji, in order that his task may sit more easy when he has more at stake.”

After a moment’s hesitation, Maniolopolo consented to this arrangement ; and then flinging off the disguise in which he had been enveloped,

* Mistress of the Wardrobe. † Singing-woman.

he bade adieu to Nevrestè, and her pretty companion until twilight, and slowly sauntered back to the Fendûk,* in which he had established himself.

As he moved along, he could not repress the misgivings which intruded themselves on his imagination, and made his pulses quicken and his heart grow sick. He well knew that for the Greek who invades the harem of the Moslem, and who fails in his disguise, there is no mercy ; and although he felt that, in his interview with his adored Carimfil, the bliss of beholding one so dearly loved and so long lost would uphold him, he dreaded the trial which awaited him in the harem of the Tchorbadji. The die was, however, cast ; and he resolved to abandon himself to the guidance of his new friends.

* Inn.

CHAPTER II.

THE day slowly passed away ; for to the anxious, time ever seems to move with folded wings, and to slumber on his scythe ; but at length the hours waned, and he returned to the Theriaki Tcharchi to fulfil his destiny.

As he entered, he was met on the threshold by the old woman, who silently beckoned him onward, and conducted him to an apartment whence the sounds of laughter, mingled with the voice of song, and the rattling of castanets, came joyously to his ear. The screen was flung aside, the portal passed, and he stood among the almè, who were already adorned for their evening's task. One fair girl occupied the centre of the floor, her arms were raised above her head,

and in her right hand she held a tambourine, whence the long streaming ribbons fell, iris-tinted, in bright confusion, and mingled with the soft tresses of her raven hair ; her little feet were bare, and her slight willow-like figure appeared to bend beneath the weight of the fairy instrument, while her eyes rested fondly on a young beauty who was treading a graceful measure to the clashing of her castanets. All were diversely employed, save one ; and that one was Mherpirwir, who, reclining on her cushions, her fair cheek pillowed on her hand, and her gaze turned anxiously towards the entrance of the apartment, was aroused from her reverie by the arrival of Maniolopolo, whom she welcomed with a blush which dyed her brow to the same tint as the glowing roses that rested on it.

In a moment all was confusion ; every almè of the troop insisted on lending her aid towards the completion of a masquerade so novel and so exciting ; and had Maniolopolo been a Moslem, he might well have imagined that he had been transported to the Paradise of the Prophet, and was tended by the houri, without the preliminary ceremony of dissolution.

“ And by what name shall we call our new sister ? ” asked Mherpirwir, as she gave the last

graceful fold to the cachemire girdle of the young Greek ; “ We might name her Kamil,* but that those dark eyes which go wandering hither and thither like hadjis† bewildered in the desert, are not quite sober enough to suit with such a title. Ey vah ! who has a head for names ? You, Lèbè, who are the best poet of the troop, have you no suggestion to make ? ”

“ I would call him Sèidika ; ” ‡ said the laughing girl who had been thus summoned to the council ; “ for does he not risk his life to look upon his mistress ? ”

“ Taib ! — well said ; ” exclaimed the old woman ; and “ Taib ! Taib ! ” was murmured by all the young beauties by whom she was surrounded.

At length the moment came when the fair troop were to transport themselves to the harem of the Tchorbadji ; and Maniolopolo was soon shrouded like the rest in a long and ample feridjhè or mantle of dark cloth, while his face was concealed by a shawl ; and in this guise he followed Nevrestè with his instrument in his hand, and a wild beating at his heart.

The Tchorbadji resided beyond the walls of the town, in a spacious house on the edge of the

* Modest.

† Pilgrims.

‡ Faithful.

plain; his gardens were traversed by a bright river, and a gilded boat danced on the ripple beneath the leafy screen of old and majestic trees. An avenue of maples, whose gnarled and twisted branches had resisted the storms of a century, led up to the house nearly from the city gates, and threw a gloom around which fell heavily on the spirit of the young Greek. But the almè were less impressible; and as they moved along, they gaily bandied jests, and ventured inferences and speculations on the liberality of the Tchorbadji, which extorted an occasional smile from Maniolopolo, anxious as he was. Snatches of wild songs, and wilder stories escaped them also, as it seemed involuntarily: their wandering and uncertain life had taught them the philosophy of present enjoyment, and the futility of foreboding; and they lived, and jested, and laughed, as though time had no morrow, or that they could furl his wings at their own giddy will.

Mherpirwir alone was staid and silent; she walked slowly with bent head, like one who indulges in deep and pensive thought; and occasionally her dark eyes flashed out from behind their jealous screen as she glanced hastily and anxiously towards Maniolopolo. But ere long

her abstraction drew down upon her the laughter of her companions, and she aroused herself, and mingled in the idle conversation of the party, or held a whispered and momentary communion with Nevrestè, until they stood before the gate of the Tchorbadji's harem.

Loud and earnest was their welcome as they sprang over the threshold into a spacious hall paved with various coloured marbles, where the plashing of water and the song of birds made the air vocal. A richly gilded door at the upper end was flung back, and through the opening they caught a delicious glimpse in the moonlight of trees, and flowers, and fountains, spreading far away into the distance. Groupes of slaves, many of them young and beautiful, were hurrying to and fro; and each as she passed had a gay word and a gayer smile for the almè. The sounds of music came soothingly from an inner apartment; and a soft stream of moonshine played along the marble floor, and dyed it with the rich tints which it pilfered as it passed from the crimson hangings of the numerous casements. Altogether it was a scene of enchantment; and it was not without regret that Maniolopolo followed the example of his companions, and obeyed the summons of a smiling

slave who waited to conduct them to the presence of her mistress.

“ Khosh geldin — you are welcome,” uttered in a low sweet voice which fell softly on the ear of the young Greek, were the first sounds that greeted him as he found himself in an apartment flashing with gold fringe and embroidery, and immediately opposite to a lovely woman who reposed on a splendid divan of velvet, surrounded by her attendants, while two fair children were sporting on a cushion at her feet ; and earnest was the tone in which he joined in the “ Khosh buldûk — well found” of the almè, as they bent before her in homage.

Ere long the T'chorbadji arrived. He was a man with whose beard time had toyed until it had withered in his grasp ; his brow was deeply interlined, and from the corners of his keen and fierce black eyes a puckered mass of minute wrinkles spread even to his temples. His nose was high and salient, and his upper lip was hidden by the thick and grizzled mustache which adorned it. He was of middle height, but of great muscular power ; and Maniolopolo at the first glance felt doubly desirous to preserve his disguise unsuspected.

Two by two the almè moved forward and

performed their graceful evolutions, which won for them many a “Mashallah!” and “Aferin!”* from the Tchorbadji, and a murmur of commendation from his fair young wife; but when at last, and alone, Mherpirwir flung off her veil, and bounded into the centre of the floor, where she stood for an instant like a startled fawn listening for a coming footstep, the Tchorbadji half rose from his sofa, and withdrew the chibouque from his lips to gaze on her. The tapers by which the apartment was illuminated threw their full blaze upon her as she rested for a moment without stirring either eye or limb, and then suddenly springing back a pace or two, twirled her tambourine above her head, as though the joyousness of her young spirit could ring out through its silver bells.

It was now that Maniolopolo aroused himself to play his part in the pageant; and suffering the shawl in which he had been shrouded to fall from his head, but without rising from the carpet on which he was reclining, he watched the moment when the fair Mherpirwir changed the measure of her movements to a slower and more melancholy chaunt; and catching up the cadence where she had suffered it to die away, accom-

* Well done.

panied her languid and exquisite performance with the wild ballad whose action it was intended to portray.

Cobah ! Cobah !* where art thou now ?
We have sought thee in vain on the mountain's brow,
We have looked for thee, love, where the stream runs clear.
Cobah ! Cobah ! thou art not here——
The wind sighs its grief thro' the cypress bough,
Cobah ! beloved one ! where art thou ?

She is gone ! she is gone ! but where ?
Go ask the earth's starry flowers—
Where the sunbeams of yesterday rest, she's there,
She can never again be our's—
Life's sweetest and brightest things,
The joys we have loved and lost,
Exist in the land where the spirits' wings
Catch Heaven's bright beam the most—

Why did she pass away,
Before her sweet youth was o'er,
Like the flower which drinks in the sunbeam to-day,
And to-morrow exists no more ?
She loved, till she lived in that light alone
That her own pure soul had made—
And she withered because the cherished one
Who had been to her both breath and sun
Left her to pine and fade—
Summer days pass—earth's blossoms die—
Heaven's stars fall from the azure sky—
Our joys all wither one by one—
Cobah is gone ! Cobah is gone !

* Morning star.

As he commenced his task, Maniolopolo breathed quickly, for the keen eye of the Tchorbadji was on him ; but as the dance proceeded, he became thrallèd by the consummate skill of the dancer, and involuntarily flung his whole soul into his voice, while a continuous murmur of admiration and applause escaped the spectators. As the song ceased, the almè seemed to die away with the strain, her head drooped, her arms hung listlessly at her side, the tambourine fell from her hand, and she stood the very picture of despair.

In the enthusiasm of the moment the wife of the Tchorbadji drew a ring from her finger, and placed it in the hand of a slave, who presented it to Mherpirwir ; while the host himself flung a purse into the lap of Maniolopolo, which he instantly transferred to the keeping of Nevrestè. Never was success more perfect ; and as the fair girls stood in groupès upon the bright-coloured carpets, the young Greek thought he had never beheld any spectacle so lovely. The gorgeously attired beauty on the divan was radiant with youth, and bright with jewels ; the graceful almè stood before her like attendant peris ; the Tchorbadji was the one shadow which relieved the bright lights of the picture ; and the children

who nestled in each other's arms, and gazed in wondering admiration on the strangers with their bright stag-like eyes, seemed to the excited imagination of the adventurer like beings of another world, where care, and crime, and withering had never come !

Dance succeeded to dance, and song to song ; and the Tchorbadji appeared to divide his enthusiasm between Mherpirwir and the disguised Sèidika, whose large deep eyes and exquisite voice had made no slight impression on the fancy of the worthy Janissary.

“ Allah buyûk der ! — My selictar aga* told me, mother, that one of your almè was as beautiful as a houri, and as graceful as a fawn ; and his face is whitened, for he said only the truth ; but he made no mention of the fair awali whose voice is to me as melodious as the Allah hu !† of the followers of the Prophet — By the soul of your father ! you shall shew your young beauties to his highness the Pasha — he will fill their mouths with gold, and spread the carpets of liberality under the feet of merit.—I have said it.”

“ May the words of my lord be written on the soul of his slave with the calam ‡ of grati-

* Sword-bearer.

† Battle cry.

‡ Reed pen.

tude !” said Nevrestè, as she prostrated herself, until her brow touched the floor before the Tchorbadji ; “ who am I, that my lord should lift my soul into the akash of felicity ? What can I do to remove from my head the ashes of unworthiness, and from the skirt of my garment the defilement of reproach ? ”

“ Ne bilirim — what can I say ? ” replied the Tchorbadji courteously ; “ Wallah billah ! I am satisfied.”

“ Sèïdika, to whose music my lord has deigned to listen, is no indifferent massaldjhe : ” said the old woman ; “ She has tales which may charm his ear, and wean his thoughts for awhile from the cares of his exalted station, if such be his good pleasure. How says my lord ? ”

The stately Effendi glanced towards his fair young wife, and reading in her bright eyes an intense anxiety which there was no need of words to interpret, he signalled his acquiescence in the suggestion of Nevrestè ; and the almè having grouped themselves on either side of Maniolopolo in attitudes whose grace would have thrallèd the spirit of a painter, he took from the hands of Mherpirwir, who reclined near him, a richly inlaid zebec, whence he drew tones of sweetness that hushed at once the under-cur-

rent of whispered delight which came like incense to the ears of the almè; and then, laying aside the instrument, he turned the full beam of his dark eyes on the Tchorbadjî, and in a voice at once subdued and musical, thus told his tale.

CHAPTER III.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE.

A WISE man will never despise a weak enemy. Fools only scoff at a danger of which they know not the probable extent ; and those in power would do well to recollect that the deepest cavern of the rock is frequently betrayed by a rift scarcely wide enough to admit the hand of a woman.

I am about to tell Your Highness a tale of a mouse ; and I pray you to let your fancy travel with me, that so we may go on our way together in good understanding. And even like the wise man to whom I have just made allusion, my lord must not despise the little animal because of the minuteness of his proportions ; and the rather that he was the Emperor of all the mice in Turkey, whom he ruled in peace, the beloved

of his subjects, with every prospect of a long and prosperous reign.

The subterranean palace was of vast extent; and well and warmly furnished with the spoils of many a midnight visit to the upper earth. The granaries were well stored with corn: peas, beans, and lupins abounded—dried grapes, figs, and other fruits calculated for tardy consumption, were neatly and compactly housed for winter use; and, in short, the padishah of the long-tails nibbled his favourite roots in calm and philosophic dignity; never troubling his head with the feuds which he well knew were continually going on above it.

But who can controul fate? Who can number the stars, count the notes of the bulbul, or postpone the decay of the rose? Great was the consternation throughout the metropolis of Mouse-land, when it was discovered that an old Fox, well known to many of them as a notoriously bad character, a marauder, and a common thief, who swept away enough to supply their whole community for a month, at a single visit to the over-grown granaries of the frightful bipeds who infested the province; and of whom the Mice had never been able to discover the utility, unless indeed when they were reluctantly compelled to

admit, that by housing their corn and roots and other eatables, they saved them (the mice) the trouble of collecting their own supplies — I repeat that great was the consternation when it was discovered that this unprincipled old Fox had thought proper, they could not imagine wherefore, to establish himself in the immediate neighbourhood of their capital ; where he kept up a constant and most unpleasant sensation, by daily and nightly incursions into the surrounding country, and by devouring every unhappy straggler who chanced to cross his path ; a circumstance that filled all the orderly and well conducted citizens with a trepidation, which, if it did not redound to the credit of their courage, at least spoke volumes for their principles.

Nor was this all : for if any fault could be found with the domestic legislation of Mouse-land, it must be admitted that the error lay in the same weakness which has at times operated unpleasantly in other nations. His Majesty the Emperor had a strong predilection in favour of personal beauty. His Prime Minister was the prime dandy of the court, who had won the Imperial smile by the graceful curl of his exquisitely pointed whiskers ; the Secretary of State

was remarkable for the fine fall in his back, when, poised on his hind legs, he presented to the monarch any of the public documents, which important missives were neatly scratched by the thorn of the mimosa plant on the bark of the orange tree—a tablet, which however unwelcome the contents of the scroll might prove to the padishah, at least prevented their ever being offensive — while the Commander-in-Chief was equally celebrated for the beautiful glossiness of his skin, which, luckily for his fortunes, was full three shades lighter than any other in the nation.

But the peculiar vanity of the monarch lay in the length of his subjects' tails; and this fact kept the court, the city, and the whole population of the under-ground Empire in a perpetual state of excitement. Machines were invented for stretching the joints—pulleys were arranged, by which the most ambitious suspended themselves heads downwards, until their eyes became bloodshot, and their respiration impeded — and there was not a mouseling throughout the Empire who did not imitate his natural enemy the kitten, by running round and round in giddy circles with his tail between his teeth !

And now—here was an ill-favoured and burly beast, established under their very noses, whose

tail was so long and bushy, that with one determined sweep it could brush away the whole palace-guard, and lay bare the private apartments of the monarch to the gaze of the entire city—It was enough to breed a rebellion!—and the court favourite, a sleek young mouse of quality, whose tail was the thirty-sixth part of an inch longer than any other near the person of his majesty, and who was, moreover, about to receive the paw of one of the princesses in marriage, actually committed suicide in the first moment of despair, by drowning himself in the skin of a gourd filled with rain water. Being good looking, and in favour at court, he was generally regretted by all those who had anything to hope through his interest—and the kind and considerate sovereign, in order to console his daughter for her unexpected loss, buried the deceased with military honours, to which—as he had always worn very magnificent moustachioes—he was undeniably entitled.

This commotion among the Mice led, however, to one result extremely distressing to the padishah, who had never contemplated any disturbance in his dominions, and whose leisure was now invaded at all moments, while his digestion suffered severely from the continual alarms to

which he was subjected ; he found that a conviction of his incapacity to protect them from their dreaded enemy, was weakening his authority over his subjects.

One of the most abject and fawning of his counsellors, who had never hitherto dared to move eye or limb in the presence of his Imperial Master, until he had received his gracious sanction to do so, had absolutely brushed his whiskers within a foot of the tip of those of his majesty, without proffering the slightest apology ; while several of his bravest generals had begged leave to retire upon their laurels, and to leave the field open to younger men ; whose interests they suddenly discovered to have been greatly injured by their own tenacity of office.

All this was extremely perplexing and vexatious to a monarch who wished for nothing beyond peace and enjoyment, and who had not the slightest taste for difficulty and danger ; and he therefore deemed it expedient to summon a council before these incipient symptoms broadened into downright rebellion ; justly considering, that should he find it expedient to do so, he had as good a right to abdicate the throne, and to provide for his own safety, as his generals had to

run away, and leave the army to provide for itself.

It was a solemn sight to witness the assembling of the gray-bearded ministers of Mouse-land; each with his tail dragging along the earth, extended to its extremest length, and his round black eyes cast mournfully to the ground. The inhabitants of the city stood aside to let the procession pass; and they looked upon it with as much interest as though they thought that the idle words of a score of trembling old Mice were likely to dislodge the offending Fox, and to banish him the country; nor was it until the last joint of the last ministerial tail had slowly disappeared through the portal of the palace, that the crowd dispersed, and the various avocations of the citizens were resumed.

The council-chamber was crowded. The monarch was seated on a pile of nuts, most luxuriously arranged, and covered with the white tufts of the wild cotton tree; while the councilors took their places in two lines, one on his right hand, and the other on his left, and made a most imposing appearance; each having assumed his most dignified bearing, as best suited to the emergency of the crisis.

The war of words was long, and at times bit-

ter ; for, with an imminent danger staring them in the face, the ministers were less cautious than usual ; and several, who had never before exchanged aught save courtesies, now bandyed sarcasms, and hints, which enlightened the monarch more profitably than pleasantly on many points on which he had hitherto been most comfortably ignorant. Peculation was brought home to the Keeper of the Privy Purse — the Secretary for Foreign Affairs was taxed with being in correspondence with their enemies the Jerhuahs, or Leaping Mice, a colony of adventurers from Egypt, who had established themselves, no one knew from what impulse, near at hand — the Commander-in-Chief was twitted with a defeat, which, it was insinuated, had filled his store-houses, while it exhausted his army — and the Prime Minister was flatly taxed with having recanted the principles he had professed on accepting office ; and misleading the monarch in a score of instances, not one of which bore the slightest analogy to the subject-matter that they were assembled to discuss.

At length the Fox was mentioned ; and then all individual animosities were merged in the common interest — What was to be done ? The answer was simple—The intruder must be dis-

lodged — ignominiously, with contempt and loathing. This resolution was adopted without a dissentient voice ; but when the next question was propounded, the perplexity became great. *How* was this very desirable measure to be effected ? Not a Mouse among them could point out the method. All the wisdom, or, at least, all the longest tails in the Empire (and hitherto that had answered the same purpose,) collected together in council were unable to decide on the *how* ? and, at length, it was hinted by a shrewd and ready-witted Lord Chamberlain, that as there appeared to be some difficulty in removing the Fox, it might be expedient for the Mice themselves to migrate to some distant territory, far from the pollution of his presence ; carrying with them the monarch they revered, the wives they cherished, and the little ones who were growing up about them.

The idea was instantly seized by an oratorical Field-Marshal, who favoured the council with several well-turned periods and flourishes of sentiment ; talked of their household gods, their hearths and homes ; and, finally, concluded by seconding the proposition of his noble friend, and strongly recommending change of air to the whole population.

The monarch leant his head upon his paw, and remained buried in deep and painful thought; when an aged Mouse of reverend aspect who had not yet spoken, arose, and respectfully bowing towards the throne, thus addressed the illustrious Padishah by whom it was occupied.

“Most noble and most powerful Emperor, in whose smile the earth flourishes — throughout whose realms the sun shines not, he being himself the light in which his subjects live — Lord of the Long Tails, whose joints are strengthened and made supple by the oil of thy countenance—Let the royal gates of attention be unfolded, that the chariots of my argument may enter into thy mind, and linger there. I have suffered all these noble and learned Mice to speak before me — they have flung back the bright page of the volume of their wisdom, and I have read every line, that I might see with their eyes, and comprehend with their understanding. But he who follows the counsels of others when his heart is not in them, is a traitor to his country, and unworthy the confidence of his sovereign; thus then, having perused the writings of the intelligent, and bowed before the argument of the eloquent, I again lift my head to declare that the precipitate advice of this counsel is contrary

to reason, and likely to lead to incalculable mischief. Great as we are as a people — brave in war — learned in peace — upright in judgment — and governed by a prince whose sceptre sways the destinies of a world, we must not disdain to learn the lesson of wisdom, in whatever tongue it may be taught.

“ Prudence is the step-sister of valour — policy is the good right hand of strength — and wit is the master-spirit of fortune. The spider may be crushed by a touch, yet in its wiliness it weaves a net of subtlety by which it grows into a giant, and feeds upon creatures more powerful than itself. The ant, still weaker of its nature, builds itself in with clay where the fruits are richest, and robs the bird that would devour both — shall *we*, then—*WE* — on whom depend the destinies of Mouseland — Shall *we* desert ourselves in such an hour as this, when by firmness we may regain our threatened security? Forbid it honour, and courage, and patriotism. If we fly, what ensues? Our city will be laid waste, our palace prostrated, our possessions become the spoil of our enemies — while we shall be hunted like robbers from place to place — pilgrims without a shrine — wanderers without a home — a nation without a name !

“ Is it for this that we have toiled and fought ? eaten the bread of carefulness, and reared aloft the banner of our ancestors ? No, no — we must be less than Mice to fall so tamely ! One effort more must be made, or the bones of our forefathers will not rest quietly in their dishonoured graves.”

And then, having secured the ear of attention, the hoary councillor laid before the assembly the stratagem by which he hoped to deliver the groaning people from their common enemy. All listened anxiously, and one universal squeak of approbation hailed the communication.

CHAPTER XII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

BRIGHT rose the moon, and shed her veil of silver over the blushing landscape. The odour of the orange blossom, and the wild thyme, floated like a cloud of incense on the air. The song of the bird of love wove a spell about it, beneath which the soul dissolved away in sadness; and the leaves whispered to the winds a tale to which no mortal words might give utterance; when the great Emperor of Mice mustered his forces on the upper earth; and witnessed with a noble enthusiasm, worthy of his exalted station, the gathering of his armed hordes.

Like a lake gently agitated by the breeze, he led them over an extensive plain, and with prompt

valour, and an energy incident to the great emergency in which he was involved, headed the host until it halted near a well-stored granary, already familiar to many of the number. The place was undefended, and he at once abandoned it to pillage; while every individual mouse, zealous in so good a cause, carried off his own portion of the spoil, with which he made the best of his way home; and there, having abandoned it to the care of the aged and the young, who were unable to encounter the fatigue and danger of a predatory excursion, by whom it was housed, and secured from the attacks of noxious reptiles; returned for a fresh booty, until little remained in the building which had lately groaned beneath the weight of grain.

When things had progressed thus far, the hoary sage who had devised the stratagem, commanded the obedient army to collect the remainder of the spoil, and strew it plentifully along the path which led to the dwelling of the Fox; taking care that not one scattered grain should betray the road to their own city; and having seen his order scrupulously fulfilled, he joined the monarch, and they at once returned in silence to the capital.

The horror of the husbandmen, when on the

morrow they discovered that the fruits of their industry had disappeared during the night, it would require the eloquence of a moullah to describe; and with bitter vows of vengeance they soon traced the track that had been taken by the supposed thief, for the scattered grain lay thick upon the ground to the very burrow of the Fox. Wonder succeeded to annoyance, and they communed among themselves what dishonest inhabitant had there established himself; a fact which they resolved to ascertain, while they also satisfied their vengeance. A strong snare was accordingly prepared; and that very evening the poor innocent Fox, who was returning supperless to bed, after a very unsuccessful foray, was caught in the trap that had been laid for him.

Many an honest man unwittingly thrusts his neck into the noose meant for a rascal, but what is written, is written; and it is useless to contend with fate.

In less than an hour, the Emperor of Mouse-land learnt the defeat of his enemy; when a general rejoicing was proclaimed throughout the city, as for a victory. And in this the wise monarch discovered to his loving people the profundity of his intelligence; for it is so rare that

a sovereign owes success to the wit of his councillors, that he does well to make the occasion serve as a national jubilee.

As he ruminated on the glorious news, he swelled with pride and importance, until he felt as though the palace could not hold him, and that he must breathe the upper air, or burst with his own greatness ; and accordingly, ordering his travelling throne, he caused himself to be carried in state on a dried maple leaf, at the head of a formidable army, to triumph over his prostrate enemy.

“ Khosh buldûk — well found, most mighty Fox ;” broke forth the exulting Padishah ; “ How do you propose to cook those of my subjects on whom you sup to-night ? ”

The captive felt the delicate irony, but he was too wily to bandy sentences with a crowned head ; and with admirable judgment he felt that this was not exactly the moment to retort : he therefore bent humbly before the monarch, and with a penitential demeanour thus addressed him :—

“ Most mighty Conqueror ! whose armies are countless as the locusts, and formidable as the panther of the desert ; whose voice is as the thunders of the tempest, and whose eye mocks

the lightning by which it is accompanied. I bow before your resentment, and own that it is just. I mocked at your power, because in your mercy you had spared me its exercise ; but now, when by my enormities I have provoked my punishment, I am compelled to admit it, because I am prostrated beneath its immensity. I deserve no forbearance, but I ask it as a boon ; and if a life of devotion to your interests can atone for a brief season of folly, I put my head into your hand, and devote myself henceforward to your service. Try me, dread sovereign ! and I will soon convince your Imperial reason that my future exertions for your welfare shall more than compensate for my past enormities."

The Padishah, struck by the humble bearing of his lately formidable enemy, and quite alive to the additional consequence which must accrue to him from the possession of so powerful and crafty a subject, hastily called his counsellors aside, and desired them to give their utmost attention to the question that he was about to lay before them ; viz. whether the good faith of the Fox should be trusted, and his services secured to the Empire by the strong chain of gratitude ; or whether, placing no faith in his protestations of amendment, they should laugh his

promises to scorn, and abandon him to the inevitable destruction which awaited him at the hands of his captors.

Many opinions were given ; for there is nothing of which either men or mice are so lavish as of their advice. It is indeed often given, not only unasked but uncared for ; and in this instance, the only sound opinion advanced was by the same old mouse who had been the cause of the capture ; for the young vain mouselings of the Imperial household were delighted at the prospect of having so large and strong a companion ; and they already began twisting their whiskers with additional importance at the bare idea. But the hoary sage was not to be misled by such childish chimeras ; and he soberly represented in the humblest but most earnest manner to the Padishah that a natural enemy could never be converted into a sincere and trustworthy friend ; for that however he might be compelled from distress, necessity, or ambition, to hide his real lineaments under the mask of good fellowship, the antipathies of his nature could never be entirely conquered or eradicated. As well might the tiger be tamed while he possessed his claws — in short, he strongly advised that the snared Fox should immediately be put

to death ; and the Empire thus delivered altogether from any relapse of its late danger.

The young and impetuous voted this reasoning a bore, and the reasoner unseasonably prosy ; while the elders insisted with some plausibility that it was politic in a weak state to form powerful alliances ; and that an admirable opportunity now presented itself of securing an ally, who, having felt the consequences of their indignation, would not again be tempted to brave it.

It would be well, nevertheless, if all diplomats who are inclined to start a similar theory, were to reflect, that bringing a dangerous enemy into the camp, to learn at once the secret of its weakness, and the fact that his overthrow was the more fortunate issue of an adventurous stratagem, is a very probable method of making their own necks the stepping-stones to his advancement and revenge.

The vain monarch, however, at once resolved to act upon the latter argument ; the Fox was accordingly sworn to allegiance with all due ceremony, and in proper form ; and he was then freed from the snare by the teeth of his new allies ; the Padishah finally returning to the city in triumph, followed by the Fox as far as the

entrance of the capital, where the Imperial suite was deprived of his presence by the unpleasant fact that either he was too large for the gates, or the gates were too small for him. To reconcile him to this compulsory exclusion, the monarch, therefore, in the exuberance of his exulting vanity, created him Vèzir, with the Imperial permission to reside beyond the walls.

It is dangerous policy to put authority into the hands of one with whose power you have not strength to contend : but as empty bladders float on the surface of the stream, and gather only the scum of the waters, while solid substances seek the bottom of the channel, and form receptacles for the gold-dust ; so vain and thoughtless men, puffed up by their own imaginary consequence, disregard the sage counsels of the wary and the wise, to pollute themselves with the frothy vapourings of the shallow and the selfish. And if such be the case with men, little marvel is it that the same weakness should exist among mice.

The Fox, fond of power, and finding at the moment no more legitimate field for his ambition, resolved to infuse into the mind of the Emperor of the Mice some of his own wild schemes of aggrandisement ; and he accordingly began by

assuring his majesty at the next divan, that, with his Imperial permission, he would soon make him master of the whole province.

The Padishah was enchanted. Every sovereign loves power, and conquest, and authority; and it is extraordinary how greedily they imbibe the prospect of securing them. The Vèzir explained his theories, and they carried conviction with them; so the new Prime Minister snapped up the old counsellor on the first favourable opportunity; delivered a funeral oration over his mangled remains, remarkable for its eloquence and its no-meaning; and then assumed the reins of government without opposition, and commenced his political career.

CHAPTER IV.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

THERE was a kingdom close beside that of Mouseland, which was peculiarly obnoxious to the Fox ; for its inhabitants, although comely and specious when all went well for their interests, were especially irritable and pugnacious in the event of any opposition : and as they could not be prevailed upon to enter into the views of the new Vèzir, he naturally felt the necessity of laying the axe to the root of their existence.

Brave as they were, the Mice had some difficulty in contending with the Cats, who held their nocturnal assemblies under the roof of a dilapidated dwelling not a hundred roods distant from the Imperial palace of the Padishah ; and accompanied their counsels with an outcry and uproar

very annoying and unsatisfactory to the Empire of the Long-tails.

The dissonance was dreadful; and the favorite wife of the Emperor, a pied mouse of extraordinary beauty, and celebrated (unhappily enough on this occasion) for the length of her ears, was actually thrown into convulsions on the breaking-up of one of their orgies; a circumstance which deprived the Padishah of an heir, and the people of a Crown-Prince — a great acquisition when there is no prospect of either a siege or a famine.

The army, also, suffered greatly from their vicinity, as they threw out detachments from their main body, who laid in ambush for the foraging parties of the Fox; and not only destroyed many of his most efficient troops, but moreover threatened to occasion a famine in his camp.

It is remarkably unpleasant for a general to have his men picked off by twos and threes, and made away with he knows not how; for the Cats were adepts at the business, and never left a trace of their victims, nor a sufficient fragment of their remains, to admit of any pretext on the part of a grateful nation to erect a monument over their ashes.

Things were in this uncomfortable state, when

one morning as the Vèzir of Mouseland was out reconnoitring, he reached the banks of a river, where a fishing-party of Storks were busily employed in the capture of their finny prey. The usual compliments passed between them ; and the Fox with infinite tact eulogized their skill, envied them their capabilities for so exciting an amusement, and finally accepted a fish which was cordially offered to him by one of the party ; after which he digressed to the beauty of the weather, the loveliness of the landscape, and the invigorating freshness of the morning air ; and when he made his parting bow, he left the whole long-necked society deeply impressed by his good breeding and judgment.

This point gained, he trotted leisurely along until he reached the head-quarters of the Cats, when he sat down before the door, as if from weariness, with the fish between his feet. The aromatic odour of his precious charge soon began to affect the olfactory organs of the feline community, who flocked from every part of the building with desire in their eyes, and water in their mouths ; and gradually advancing nearer and nearer to the Fox, they began to be very inquisitive about the fish.

Reynard, having a point to carry, of course af-

fected the most supreme indifference, and turned the fish over and over with his paw in a manner at once careless and graceful, exhibiting it in all its beauty to the longing cats. This was natural enough, for it is what is done every day in the world; the possession of an object is little, unless that possession is coveted by others; and its decided enjoyment consists in the envy which it excites.

As they continued to urge him, even beyond the limits of politeness, the Fox at length condescended to inform the expectant Cats that their curiosity was as unavailing as it was oppressive; for that fish could only be obtained by ready wit, and good policy, by stratagem, and craft; qualities in which their people were peculiarly deficient; and that even were he to tell them where they abounded, they would never have the address to catch them.

This announcement occasioned universal indignation among the Cats. To be told that you are a rogue is not agreeable, yet the accusation is borne with philosophy by many a haughty spirit—but to be told that you have not wit enough to be a rogue, is enough to try the temper of any animal; and accordingly the whole feline population was in a tumult.

Order being at length restored by the energetic exertions of a respectable old tabby, whose talent for ratting had given him great influence over the minds of the mob, he lost no time in explaining to them that resenting a few light words, evidently uttered in mere playfulness by the Fox, was not at all the way to come at the fish; a cogent species of reasoning which penetrated at once to the stomachs of the assembly; and when he found that he had secured the public ear, he gently hinted that those fire-eating mousers who did not feel their honour satisfied by this policy, might take an early opportunity after the fish were secured, of resenting the insult which had been offered to them as a nation; a suggestion that proved the profound diplomacy of the old ratter, and shewed that he knew more of the world and its wisdom than the Fox felt inclined to give him credit for.

Under the influence of this sound advice, the Cats drew in their claws, lowered their backs, which had each been arched like the moon when her course is but half run; and began to tread on velvet, and to purr as melodiously as though the fish which they hoped to obtain were already in their possession. One or two indeed turned away their heads, and spat upon the ground in

disgust ; but they passed unheeded in the crowd ; and quite satisfied with having thus magnificently testified their disapprobation, remained on the spot to ascertain whether they were likely to benefit by the piscatorial enquiry then pending.

At the urgent entreaty of the ancient tabby, the Fox, thinking he had carried matters far enough, at length consented to point out to the Cats the place where the fish were to be procured ; although he still assured them that the gratification of their curiosity was the only advantage likely to accrue to them from the information. Placing himself therefore in an easy attitude, and occasionally whisking away a pertinaceous fly, which persisted in buzzing about his nose, with his handsome tail, he thus addressed them :—

“ People of Catland ! However useless the secret may prove to you which you are anxious to possess, I will humour your weakness, because it is common to all nations to seek information which can never avail them, or rather, of which they seldom learn how to avail themselves. Know then that one day, when I was suffering from a languor which I trusted might be dispelled by the fresh air, I wandered along the river bank, where I encountered a number of Storks feasting

upon a profusion of the daintiest fish ; and being thoroughly satiated with Mice, I enquired of one of them where this desirable luxury could be procured.

“ For a time he resisted my importunity, but at length he informed me that on the other side of the river there was an exhausted lake, in which thousands of fish were expiring ; and that, for his own part, he had become not only difficult and fastidious in his selection, but absolutely quite tired of them. Such being the case, I entered into an arrangement with the Stork to exchange mice for fish, which enables us to vary our repasts, and proves perfectly satisfactory to both of us.”

The Cats were overjoyed at this intelligence, and thanked the Fox warmly for his generosity, at which he laughed in his sleeve, as is customary on such occasions : and then, presenting the fish which had led to the discussion, to a graceful little green-eyed vivacious-looking kitten, nearly related to the royal family, he took his leave, followed by one universal purring of admiration.

A council of Cats was speedily assembled ; the available troops reviewed and harangued by a fierce old black general, who had lost one eye, two

inches of tail, and half an ear in some previous engagement ; and a resolution was formed to attack the camp of the mice that very night. The army were in high spirits : the citizens volunteered by scores : and the head-quarters were all commotion. There is nothing which more excites the valour of an attacking force than the known weakness of the enemy.

Lapped in delicious and most savoury dreams lay the august Emperor of the Mice. His visions had carried him into the palace of the Pasha, and buried him in the midst of a pillauf of chicken ; where he was enjoying himself discreetly, when one sharp shrill squeek of anguish rang through the city streets, and penetrated even to the Imperial apartment. Up sprang the Padisha ; the pillauf vanished ; and in its place he saw scores of ill-omened Cats pouncing upon his defenceless subjects, and bearing them off in their insatiate jaws.

His majesty stood for one instant aghast — but only one—Like all great personages, he possessed the most beautiful decision of character ; and accordingly, when he had drawn a long breath, and taken in at the same time a perfect view of the proceedings, he prudently turned tail, and held himself under the roots of a tree

near at hand. In this he acted, as he ever did, on principle; for, as he justly argued, while he lay snugly ensconced in his hole, and the work of carnage went on above his head, the life of the sovereign was every thing to the subject; his generals were paid for fighting, just as he was paid for reigning; and he could not, therefore, without indelicacy, interfere with their privileges.

The Fox, meanwhile, had not been idle; he had an extraordinary talent for diplomacy, like most of his race; and he had so thoroughly ingratiated himself with the Storks, who, though long-necked, were by no means long-headed, that they readily entered into his views. He obtained a private audience of the chief of the tribe, in which he very ably set forth his own disinterestedness—for he had not considered it necessary to inform his new allies that he held an official appointment under the Emperor of Mouseland, for whose person and people he was well aware that the Storks entertained as much contempt as they did for the nation of the frogs; devouring them, whenever they fell in their way, in precisely the same unceremonious manner—while he earnestly and emphatically represented that the Storks were a mighty and a numerous

tribe, requiring much sustenance ; and, like the Arabs of the bipeds, accustomed to secure it by their talents for the chase ; while the Cats were an insidious, beggarly, poaching community, exhausting by their treacherous and wily arts, the prey which was the legitimate right of their more generous enemies.

The inference was clear ; in the extirpation of the Cats, the Storks were ridding themselves of an obnoxious race ; while the Fox could derive no advantage whatever from their destruction, save the calm and placid conviction of having done his duty, and benefitted a most important portion of the creation.

There is nothing either so rare or so beautiful as self-sacrifice in a good cause. It is the germ whence spring all patriots !

When the generous Fox had departed, the Aga of the Storks marshalled his forces, and laid before them the stratagem of their friendly counsellor, which met with unanimous approval, and was immediately resolved upon ; nor was its exercise long delayed, for morning had scarcely dawned when the Cats were seen entering their territory ; and as the vanguard of the two parties met, the old tabby of whom mention has been already made, advanced in front of his fel-

lows, and was immediately confronted by the chief of the Storks in person.

When the necessary ceremonies had terminated, the Cats announced their pacific intentions, explained the treaty into which they desired to enter, and proposed the preliminaries for the deliberation of the other party.

The Storks listened with a gravity worthy of the occasion — the exports and imports were curiously discussed ; and many propositions advanced likely to accelerate the contemplated exchange ; when an old Stork, renowned for shrewdness, and that minute talent for calculation which is so essential to the financial interests of a community, stood up ; and poizing himself steadily on one leg, with an aplomb strikingly demonstrative of the complete and nice equilibrium of his arguments, remarked, that with all due consideration and respect for the talent exhibited by their visitors, he considered that in all tribes and nations supporting themselves by their own exertions, time was property, and consequently not to be lightly or inconsiderately squandered ; and that, however convenient it might be for one party to await the result of the other's foray, it would save a great deal of time, and be infinitely more advisable,

that in the event of the completion of the treaty, the Cats should be ferried across the river at once, where they might revel on fish, binding themselves on their return to supply the camp of the Storks with mice enough for their immediate consumption.

The Cats, delighted at the suggestion, concluded the treaty at once; and laying the Mice which they had brought with them before the Aga, had the satisfaction of seeing them swallowed by the Storks; after which ceremony each committed himself to the care of one of their new allies, who instantly spread their wings, and left the sordid earth and all its creeping things far beneath them.

The Cats, unaccustomed to this mode of travelling, were variously affected; the timid shut their eyes, and twisted their tails round the necks of their obliging friends; the more ambitious swelled with delight, and almost taught themselves to believe that they were flying on their own wings; the bilious grew sick and dizzy; and the more delicate absolutely fainted.

But all delusions ceased as the Storks hovered for an instant just above the centre of the rapid stream; and then with a loud shriek of triumphant hatred, loosened their hold, and

hurled their victims to a watery grave. Black, white, or tabby, not a cat escaped ; and thus the Fox, at the expense of a score or two of Mice, freed the Empire for ever from their dangerous vicinity, and provided for the general safety ; and he retired to his burrow that night with the happy consciousness of superior desert, which must ever brighten the dreams of a minister, who, while he is receiving the grateful acknowledgements of his sovereign, and the plauditory acclamations of a whole people, is deeply impressed by the delicious conviction that, like the cuckoo which lays its egg in the nest of another bird, he is quietly providing for his own interests.

CHAPTER V.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE — *continued.*

AMBITION, unlike jealousy, will not submit to be dieted on trifles; and, accordingly, the little triumphs of the Fox merely stimulated his taste for power; and led him to wilder and bolder schemes which were bounded only by universal monarchy.

We are told that ambition peopled Eblis, and that it is the favourite vice of Sheitan; it will, therefore, be readily believed that an occasion was soon afforded to the Fox for the indulgence of his peculiar passion.

A caravan passing through the province, arrived within a few stadia of the metropolis of Mouseland, and created intense alarm among the foraging parties, who came scampering home-

ward from all quarters, with a paucity of provisions exceedingly unsatisfactory to the sedentary portion of the community ; and with tremendous accounts of the monsters who composed it, that plunged the whole city into convulsions of terror ; only allayed by the recollection of the quantity of good things likely to be scattered by the reckless travellers, should they chance to halt sufficiently near to the territories of his Imperial majesty, to enable his subjects to secure a part of the spoil.

Their hopes were fulfilled, and their fears amply compensated ; for, in their immediate vicinity, close on the borders of a thick wood, a poor Camel fell under his load, and it was found impossible to raise him from the earth ; his burthen was accordingly divided among the rest of the string ;* and as the travellers possessed no means of transporting the exhausted animal, he was necessarily left to his fate.

Rest, and the means of indulging his hunger, soon restored the sick Camel to health ; and when the foraging parties once more ventured forth from their subterranean city, to profit by the halt of the caravan, the Fox espied the Camel at a dis-

* Camels travel in strings in the East, and the train is usually led by a donkey.

tance, calmly browsing on the young shoots of a stately tulip-tree. His resolution was instantly formed, and, without the delay of a moment he turned tail, and pausing at the gate of the capital, demanded an immediate audience of the Emperor. His hurried manner and imperious tone greatly agitated the city-guard, a party of whom scampered to the palace ; and in a few moments the Imperial procession was seen issuing forth with as much haste as decorum would permit.

Having made his obeisance, the Fox entered at once on the subject of his anxiety, and acquainted the august Majesty of Mouseland with the fact, that, an insolent Camel, a mere beast of burthen, a vile slave, bred to toil and obedience — in short, it were endless to repeat the opprobrious epithets lavished upon the intruder — was ravaging the forest at pleasure, polluting the fountain at which the Imperial thirst was often quenched, and devouring the fruits destined for the Imperial treasury.

The monarch trembled for his throne, for he had once seen a Camel, and he had never forgotten his terror on that occasion ; he was, therefore, unprepared with any suitable comment on the alarming intelligence ; and the surprise of

the monarch may be imagined, when finding him dumb, the Grand Vèzir thus continued :—

“ This must not be, most puissant Padishah — Shall an empire like that of Mouseland — a free people, under a free sovereign, whose linked tails would encompass El Caf, and whose tribes fill the whole earth, bow before an insolent caittiff whose only virtue is obedience? Shall a nation, accustomed to live on the labour of others, yield to a poor spiritless wretch, whose very existence is toil? Forbid it the Majesty of Mouse-land! Lord of the Long-Tails, I prostrate myself before you; I pray you to be just to yourself; and not to suffer the shadow of your greatness to diminish. Were not the Cats a mighty and a warlike people, and have we not destroyed them? Are not the Storks the natural enemies of your subjects, and have we not sharpened our wits upon their dulness; and made them serve us by throwing a veil over their heads? The Camel must be subjected to the same illustrious sway — he must bow before the carpet of your Imperial majesty, and acknowledge your supremacy: or he must die the death of a traitor, and perish miserably for his presumption.”

A general squeak of enthusiastic approbation burst from the assembled courtiers; and it was

with some difficulty that the Fox could make himself heard, as he approached the climax of his speech. A flourish of the monarch's tail, however, at length commanded attention, and the Vèzir hastened to add, that he should strongly counsel his Majesty to enforce immediate obedience from the baseborn intruder; as should vigorous measures be long delayed, they might prove altogether abortive; a circumstance which would tend to throw a doubt on the power and greatness of his Majesty, and diminish the lustre of his reign. The beard of rebellion should be plucked out by the roots, before it grew into strength and dignity; and he, therefore, called upon the Light of the Empire, and the Glory of the Earth, to subdue at once the insolence of the Camel, and compel him to his allegiance.

The Padishah swelled with conscious greatness as he listened to the oration of his minister; and, with a look of supreme command, he ordered the immediate attendance of the Camel; when it became a question, how, in the event of the summons being disregarded, obedience could be enforced. Gradually, as the difficulties of the case presented themselves, the dignity of the monarch dwindled away; and, at length, he was

fairly compelled to confess — though he did it with a reluctant majesty of manner, much commented on by the court — that he really did not see how such an event could be brought to pass.

The Fox, with a confident and pleasant air, immediately volunteered to undertake the embassy, and pledged his veracity on its success; and the whole population of Mouseland, proud of such an ambassador, embraced the offer with avidity. It is always agreeable to find a back willing to bear our burthens, and broad enough to support them; and thus the Mice were delighted to leave a mission, of which they were to reap the benefit, in the hands of their crafty ally.

The Fox, thus duly authorised and empowered to be impertinent, journeyed on with the self-complacency usual to plenipotentiaries under such favourable circumstances; and having reached the spot where the Camel, wearied with wandering through the forest, and satiated with leaves and fruits, was gravely chewing the cud under the shadowing branches of an odoriferous cedar; he accosted him in haughty language, at once declared his mission, and so magnified the power and prowess of his master, that the Camel, who like many other animals in the crea-

tion who carry their heads high, was low enough in heart; rose humbly from the earth, and assuring the Ambassador that he had transgressed ignorantly, besought of him as an especial favour to intercede for him to the Emperor; and was at once given to understand that he must forthwith wait upon the Padishah in person, as no minor submission would be received.

The Camel, trembling with anxiety and terror, declared his readiness to compensate by any means in his power, for his involuntary trespass on the territories of so high and powerful a prince; and he at once volunteered to accompany the Fox to court; when, having desired his timid companion to halt on the edge of the wood, about a furlong from the city gates, until the Emperor should consent to give him an audience, the Vèzir of Mouseland hastened to report his success to his Imperial master, and to conduct him to the presence of this new ally.

Greatness is merely comparative; and it is measured by so many different standards, that it is often very difficult to determine on its actual limits. Thus, as the Camel stood buried in thought, with his head drooping, and his heart quailing, he scarcely heeded the crowd of busy Mice who were darting about immediately at his

feet ; nor had he an idea that among them were some of the high officers of the household, and personages of distinction about the court of the very nation to which he had come there to swear allegiance. Had he been asked his opinion of the locality, little dreaming that he was in the close vicinity of a great city, he would have simply answered that the spot was cool, quiet, and shady, but terribly infested with vermin !

Such is life. The greatness of one is the scorn of another — the pride which fills one bosom is fed by what appears disgrace to its neighbour ; and thus the world rolls on, peopled with delusion, and deception, and self-value.

At length the Camel was roused from his reverie by a disagreeable chorus of squeaking, and a great commotion among the Mice ; whose numbers continued to increase so rapidly, and to approach him so nearly, that he was just about to crush a score of the boldest under his heavy foot, when the reappearance of the Fox diverted his attention, and saved the lives of a few individuals of rank and fashion who would otherwise have been victimised.

Under these circumstances the rage of the indignant Camel may be readily imagined, when on

demanding of the Ambassador whether he should succeed in obtaining an audience of the offended monarch, he was informed that he was already in the presence; and that a somewhat spare, lean-looking mouse with gray whiskers, seated upon a morsel of red rag, was the mighty sovereign, whose nod was to decide his fate.

For a moment the Camel bent down his long neck, and gazed steadily and deridingly on the wretched little animal, who sat swelling with pride, surrounded by his court; and then, flinging up his heels, he gave one tremendous kick which sent a dozen courtiers flying into the air, and deliberately trotted back to the forest.

Pride, unsustained by circumstance and power is as untenable as the wind; and they who endeavour to cover their insignificance by big words, labour as idly as boys who throw stones at the sun, or dogs who bay the moon when it is at full.

Abashed by the indignity which he had just sustained under the very walls of his capital, and in the presence of the pillars of the state, the Padishah sat for awhile with his head buried in his tail, as though he had yielded up the spirit; but at length his great soul asserted itself even

in this painful emergency ; and calling the fox aside, he thus reproachfully addressed him.

“ Vèzir ! whom I have long regarded less as my slave than as the brother of my adoption ; upon whose neck I have flung the reins of power, and in whose hands I have placed the beard of wisdom ; what disgraceful ashes have not your blind councils heaped upon my dishonoured head ? The graves of my ancestors are defiled ; and the faces of my people are blackened. The wise men have said that kings are as compasses in the midst of the nations, to sweep the great circle of wisdom ; but you have made me the pole of folly, and the index of disgrace. Till measures are well pondered in the mind, madmen alone venture to risk their exercise ; but double is his delusion who crushes others in his own defeat. When the sun rose to-day above the earth which was created for my pleasure, my spear was as a ray of the morning, my sword a bright beam flashing death and terror, and my helmet a star of light ; princes caught the fire of glory from my glance ; and my smile made heroes—and now, I am a dishonoured sovereign, abashed by the gaze of my own subjects.”

“ Great sanctuary of the world !” replied the Fox, bowing meekly before the irritated monarch ;

“ Refuge of the distressed ! whose fame is echoed from hill to hill, and with whose praise the valleys of the earth are vocal ; I, the humblest slave of the Majesty of Mouseland, beseech your highness to be no longer possessed by grief, but to raise your eyes to glory, and to regild the crown of courage. I hold to the nostrils of power the pleasing perfume of success ; and while I wear away my forehead on the humble sands of prostration, I promise on the faith of my allegiance, that ere long, the insolent slave who has dared to brave your anger shall be trodden down in his pride.”

Somewhat appeased by these assurances, the monarch once more consented to be guided by his wily minister ; and then, abruptly dismissing his court, he returned *incog* to the city, much to the disappointment of the sight-loving inhabitants, who had promised themselves a pageant, of which the untoward event that had occurred beyond the walls had altogether deprived them ; for no monarch can be disposed to shew himself to his people, just as he has been kicked.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

THE FOX, at one moment swearing vengeance on the insolent Camel who had dared to thwart him in his wishes; and at the next, laughing until he was obliged to wipe the tears from his eyes with his paw, as he remembered the ridiculous overthrow of dandy Lords of the Bed-chamber, and conceited Officers of State; travelled on until he reached a sugar plantation with which he was well acquainted; moralizing as he went in a strain more curious than edifying; and not at all calculated to have raised him in the esteem of the pigmy Emperor of Mouse-land if it had unfortunately come to his knowledge.

Having entered the plantation, he selected one

of the finest and most luscious sugar-canes he could find ; and then sauntered to a grove in the neighbourhood, the favourite haunt of an aged Monkey, gray in the arts of mischief.

Affecting not to observe the hoary tenant of the wood, the Fox seated himself under a tree, and began fanning himself with his tail, as though overcome with heat and fatigue ; while he leered out at the ends of his eyes from time to time, and was overjoyed to perceive the Monkey intent upon the sugar cane, licking his wishful jaws, and leaping from branch to branch in all the restlessness of desire. At length the water began to flow from his parted lips ; and then the Fox, believing that the proper moment was come, affected suddenly to perceive him, and with extreme courtesy greeted him, and begged to make his acquaintance.

The Monkey grinned and chattered, and maintained a respectful distance ; having an unpleasant consciousness that Foxes sometimes devoured Monkeys, and deeming it most prudent to keep out of the reach of a paw ; though he returned the compliment of his new acquaintance with considerable urbanity, influenced in no slight degree by the sight of the sugar-cane.

The prospect of advantage always smooths

the temper : it is the oil of selfishness flung on the waters of passion.

Gradually, therefore, but without lessening the distance between them, the two ill-assorted companions fell into conversation, until the Fox had confided just as much of his intentions to the Monkey as he judged expedient ; and had hinted to him, that if he would pledge himself to assist his designs, he would not only bestow upon him the tempting luxury which he appeared so much to covet, but would direct him where to find a thousand such.

The Monkey first listened and doubted ; then looked and believed : and, finally, requesting the Fox to retire a little apart, promised his co-operation as soon as he should have devoured the sugar-cane. The crafty designer smiled and complied ; and when the Monkey had completed his delicious repast, he led the way to the forest, where the unsuspecting Camel was browsing on the branches of the tall trees.

Never take an ally into the field fasting. Hunger sours the temper, and quenches the enthusiasm. A man never loves his neighbour so well as when he has just plunged his fingers into his pillauf.

Having pointed out the Camel to his new

friend, the Fox sauntered away, and left the whole affair in the hands of the Monkey ; who immediately scrambled into the tree on which the intended victim was feeding, and seizing the broken halter that had been left in his nose, fastened his head to the branches.

It is dangerous to leave even a trace of your former insignificance when you are bent on affecting greatness. Many a proud man is lost by the broken halter of some low habit, which puts his beard into the hand of his enemy, and defiles it with the unsavoury oil of ridicule.

The Fox, who had kept a watchful eye on his new friend, speedily perceived his success, and hastened to congratulate him on his dexterity and address ; and then, when he found that the vanity of the Monkey was touched, he made him ample promises of reward, if he would oblige him by his valuable co-operation in another undertaking which he had much at heart.

The hoary pug, who had been linked to the will of the Fox by the chain of sweet words, directly consented ; and, leaving the unfortunate Camel tied to the tree, the two confederates journeyed through the forest until they came to a piece of timber which some woodsman had been employed in sawing asunder.

Here the Fox paused, and pointing to a wedge which had been inserted in the wood, informed the Monkey, who had not yet ventured to approach him too nearly, that he had particular occasion for the wedge, but that he had striven in vain to possess himself of it, and now relied solely upon the sagacity of the same master-spirit that had captured the Camel.

Pug smiled, almost in scorn, at the helplessness of his companion; and forthwith began to work away with his teeth and paws with an energy which greatly diverted the Fox, who was laughing heartily in his own quiet peculiar way, when suddenly a mightier effort than usual dislodged the wedge, and the tail of the Monkey was caught, and held fast by the closing timber.

“Ajaib — wonderful !” shouted Reynard giving loose to a peal of merriment that echoed through the forest; “Had your beard grown gray in ignorance that you had yet to learn, oh ! Monkey ! that they who toil to gratify their sensual appetites, and labour under the impetus of idle vanity, are fitting tools for craftier spirits, and ever fall into a trap of their own setting? You have breakfasted heartily at my expense; and I do not deny that you have earned the meal; but it is ever ill-policy to consume the

wages before the work is done. I owed you the courtesy of telling you these truths, that you might not die as unprofitably as you have lived; but I will not weary you with words."

And, so saying, he fell upon the ill-fated Monkey, and devoured him without mercy.

They who, to prosper themselves, consent to further the evil designs of the unworthy, fail not to reap the reward of their mean self-love.

In an audience of the Padishah, which he obtained immediately on reaching the city, the Fox at once explained the situation of the Camel, at which the Monarch and all the court laughed themselves almost into convulsions; and many witticisms were ventured, that extremely delighted the younger members of the court; while the Vèzir, in a fine imaginative strain of eloquence, was explaining the stratagem by which he had secured the helpless Camel; wherein it was remarkable that the Monkey was never once mentioned.

The ingratitude of the great was written in letters of crimson upon the first scroll of knowledge. It is easier to number the stars, than to be remembered by the mighty whom you have served. A favour conferred upon the haughty

is as a chain about their necks, of which they often break the links with a scymitar.

A general rejoicing was ordered throughout the metropolis of Mouseland ; for former defeat always doubles the triumph of subsequent success ; compliments were lavished on the Vèzir, which he received with characteristic modesty. He was designated the Saviour of the Empire, and he placed his paw upon his heart, and swore that he had done nothing, absolutely nothing. He was declared with acclamation to be the great hero of the age, the master-spirit of victory, the Conqueror of the Cats ; and he only smiled a grateful smile, and assured the excited populace that he had but done his duty.

They who feel their power can afford to ape humility—it is throwing gold dust into the eyes which should not be too clear-sighted : and the great do well at once to dazzle and to blind ; for it is a compound policy beyond the reach of the vulgar.

While the citizens of Mouseland were enjoying themselves in preparations for the rejoicing, the Padishah, anxious to secure his share of the general gratification, and unable, from his exalted station, to join in the amusements of his subjects, determined on proceeding to the forest

in order to gratify his revenge by exulting over the arrogant captive ; and accordingly, commanding his retinue to be prepared, he hastened to the field of triumph, and climbing the tree to which the Camel was attached, he seated himself upon a branch directly above his head, and poured forth upon him the whole volume of his angry satire.

“ Welcome, thrice welcome, you of the straight back !” he said scoffingly ; “ Happy are you, who can feed upon the young leaves of the forest, and drink water from the clouds ; who can wander hither and thither over the earth —and yet, what say I ? It would seem that you are less free than your stature would imply ; for, had not your neck been longer than your head, you would never presumptuously have dared to kick up the dust of contempt in the eyes of an assembled court, and a free people, until you had learned how far it might be safe to brave their resentment. How like you now the lesson ? Does it not depend upon my sovereign will whether you become once more a wanderer over the green plains, and a quaffer of the bright rivers, or remain here to die the death which your vain-glorious self-appreciation has drawn down upon you ? Truly it does so ; that your blanched

bones as they glimmer in the moonlight may remind all future upstarts of the danger of overlooking through their own vanity the probable power of others ; and of attempting to despise and to subdue animals eminently their superiors."

As he felt that he had here uttered a most impressive sentiment, the Padishah paused for applause ; and the assembled Mice, seeing at once the singular appositeness with which such a remark fell from his Imperial lips, were not niggardly in their demonstrations of approbation.

There are few things so admirable upon earth as consistency ; and as the Fox listened, the tears of suppressed merriment trembled in his eyes.

Meanwhile the Camel, conscious that despite the insignificance of his enemy, he was nevertheless completely at his mercy, felt the necessity of conforming to any proposal, and of submitting to any indignity in order to save his life ; and, accordingly, making no comment on the absurdity of the monarch's address, he laid his heart on the ashes of humility, and thus replied :—

" Mirror of mightiness, and Sun of strength !
My crime against your greatness has grown out

of my ignorance of its extent. I came from a far land, a helpless stranger, unknowing and unknown. No dream of your power had fallen upon my soul, nor had the light of your presence beamed upon my eyes — I sinned, because I deceived myself, and judged of your strength by your size. I am already sufficiently punished by the knowledge that I have incurred your displeasure. Pardon me, therefore, dread sovereign, lest I expire of grief; and suffer me, by a life of devotion to your Imperial will, to expiate my transgression. Put the rings of obedience into my ears, and let me swear eternal allegiance, and be counted among those who have the happiness to be your subjects.”

As the Camel ceased speaking the Fox stepped forward, and eloquently and humanely interceded for the captive: he represented to the Padishah how frequently animals really fell into error unconsciously; and made a delicate allusion to his own career — reminded his hearers, with a most sonorous sigh, of the days when he himself not only despised, but fed on Mice; and ultimately asked, with a noble consciousness of high desert, whether he had given the Emperor or the Empire reason to repent their mercy.

An universal and eager squeak of dissent

rose on all sides ; and as the Fox bowed gracefully in acknowledgment, the Padishah ordered the oath to be administered to the Camel, and the halter gnawed asunder, which was immediately done ; and the emancipated prisoner followed his new master from the forest, a good deal impressed by the oration of the Fox, and reconciled by the presence of a companion in disgrace.

The troubles of others always assist in consoling us for our own.

CHAPTER VII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued*.

THE subjugation of the Camel caused an immense commotion in the forest, and the mysterious prowess of the Mouse was canvassed on all sides, until the most extraordinary and magical tales became current; and animals of various kinds, not wishing to brave an influence which they could not comprehend, and anxious to continue a peaceable existence, voluntarily tendered their allegiance to the mice.

Shadows frequently frighten the crowd; and we always dread that evil the most of which we cannot define the limits.

The Fox revelled in power, and increased in popularity. He was never idle an hour; for when the state affairs of Mouseland were ar-

ranged, he was busied in ingratiating himself with their new allies, who gladly returned civilities by which they were likely to benefit. Presents poured in upon him; and if occasionally in their desire to gratify his well known fondness for poultry, some of the beasts brought him a Stork or two, he only smiled at the mistake, and did not consider it expedient to inform them that they were destroying the saviours of the Mice!

But there was still a thorn in his heart. The Lion was unsubdued! The king of the forest was unconquered! And the Fox had registered a vow that every beast of the earth should own the power of his guile. With this resolution he therefore again presented himself at the carpet of the Padishah, and reported the contumacity of the Lion; but the monarch of Mouseland appeared anxious to evade the subject; and even stated to the excited Vèzir that he deemed it no dishonour to share the sovereignty of the earth with so noble an animal; —and that indeed, he would rather live on terms of amity with him, than by provoking his anger run the risk of arousing a wrath which might be dangerous.

The Fox, with all respect, scouted this argu-

ment; and represented to the timid monarch that while the Lion continued to be lord of the forest, there was no safety for the Empire of the Mice, which he could destroy in one paroxysm of rage; and he begged to be permitted to remind the Padishah that the animal in question was celebrated for the irritability of his disposition, and his total disregard of the feelings of others, when he was inclined to gratify either his anger or his appetite; a fact which was too notorious to need comment.

The Emperor listened; and at length wearied by the arguments, and moved by the intreaties of his enterprising Vèzir, he consented to summon the Lion to his presence; and deputed the Fox Ambassador Extraordinary on the occasion.

Great was the indignation of the Lion when the Fox declared his mission; he lashed the sounding forest with his tail; he flung lightnings from his large eyes, bristled his wiry mane like a column of lances, and moistened the dust of the earth with the crimson drops which fell from his yawning jaws: his roar shook the young cedars to their roots; and he would instantly have devoured the Ambassador had he not already breakfasted, and despised him too

much to run the risk of a surfeit in the indulgence of his revenge.

A veil fell over the heart of the majesty of Mouseland at this new defeat; he had grown out of himself by his extraordinary successes; and every passenger who picks up ninety-nine piastres in his path, naturally feels aggrieved if he does not find the hundredth. Since the Fox had urged him to subjugate the Lion, the Lion had become to him the hundredth piastre; and he resented the failure accordingly.

“We had done better, oh! Vèzir;” he said sharply, “had we buried our displeasure in the hollow of our hearts, and closed our eyes to an evil which was beyond remedy, than thus to have laid it on our open palm, and lifted it to the light, on a hand which had no power to strike it down. When a monarch threatens without the means of vengeance, the escape of his enemy is his own defeat—and thus, oh, short-sighted minister! you have scattered the ashes of confusion on the head of your master!”

The Fox listened respectfully; nor did he attempt to justify himself, nor to remind the Padishah of the few trifling services which he had rendered him; though he might have done so in the full assurance of their being forgotten, as in

such cases all benefits are certain to be by the great; but simply declaring to the irritated monarch that the Lion should yet be compelled to wear his yoke, he hastily quitted the presence.

Hunting with the Lion is but hungry work, and fighting with him is especially dangerous; of this the Fox was well aware: and he therefore determined to eschew his present acquaintance either as friend or foe, and to find some go-between simple enough to run all risks for the mere honour of being employed.

There are many such brainless busy-bodies to be found everywhere, and the crafty Vèzir was an adept in the choice of his tools. He hesitated only a moment, and his resolution was taken. He had remarked in one of his rambles a neighbouring Jackall; a poor spiritless, cowardly, cringing animal, who satisfied himself with the offal of the very game he had run down, for the weak gratification of keeping company with a Lion.

What a vast number of Jackalls there are in the world!

The Fox curled his tail in contemptuous satisfaction as he remembered the narrow-hearted slave, and trotted away to his lair without a

moment's misgiving as to the result of his undertaking.

"He will whiten my face once more in the eyes of all Mouseland;" he murmured to himself as he went; "A base-spirited beast, who would barter his mother for a comfortable meal! — Creatures of this description are readily worked upon; so now for my new friend."

The negotiation was short, and the result perfectly satisfactory to both parties. The Fox caught two or three rabbits by the sly, and presented them to the Jackall, suffering him to devour the whole of them himself; a liberal and delicate proceeding which was extremely agreeable to that animal, who was delighted for once to play the Lion's part, and who had never experienced the same attention before; his *great* friend having a remarkably fine appetite, and seldom rejecting anything but garbage. An eternal regard was sworn between the new acquaintance in consequence; and the Jackall licking his lips after his savoury repast, whispered his regret that the liberal, gentlemanly Fox, was not a Lion; at which Reynard only laughed, assuring him that ere long, if he proved faithful to his pledge, he would convince him that in a war of wits one Fox was equal to two Lions.

Having given this very satisfactory assurance, and dropped a few more hints for the guidance of his groveling and beggarly ally, the Vèzir retired quietly to his burrow, and left the matter entirely to the exertions of the Jackall; who, an hour or two after this pleasant interview rushed breathlessly into the presence of the contumacious Lion, and fell at his feet as if in the last agony.

“How now, haramzadeh—base-born slave!” roared the monarch of the wood; commencing, as from his superior strength and station, he had every right to do, by abuse of his caitiff-follower; “What dirt have you been eating, and what ass was your father, that you thus break in upon the slumber which has just succeeded to my repast? Speak, recreant! Who has threatened your ill-fed carcase with violence, that you come to play the craven in my very den?”

“Dread lord and master!” faltered out the traitor; “forgive me if I tremble, and hear my tale before you chide my fears. I knew that my lord must dine; and I was roaming the country in search of prey for the Mighty One before whom I bow, when suddenly there came forth of the thicket a Lion well nigh as lordly as yourself, who, seeing me in pursuit of game,

asked me for whom I hunted — Alas ! I could but reply by the truth, and I told him humbly but firmly that I served the lord of the forest ; ‘ Bè hày—what’s this ?’ he foamed, as he ground his strong teeth with rage ; ‘ Who is he who would be lord where my foot ranges, and my roar is heard ? Go, wretch, to the paltry animal whose slave you are, and bid him hide himself in the deepest den of the mountain, or the thickest underwood of the forest, lest I encounter him in my wanderings, and rend him piecemeal !’ Need I tell the Light of the Earth that I refused to be the bearer of such a message ? With what mitkal should I have measured out my lord’s bounty, had I undertaken an errand like this ? No ! I sought rather to remove all abomination from the beard of majesty, and answered in as high a tone ; and truly, most puissant Padishah of the forests, I had well nigh paid the karatch* as the penalty of my rashness ; for the imperious stranger sprang on me, and would have devoured me, had I not raised the dust of flight, and hastened to apprise my lord of his new enemy.”

Loud roared the Lion when he ceased to listen. He had long dwelt in solitary majesty,

* Capitation-tax levied on raïahs, or vassals.

the acknowledged monarch of the forest : and he resolved at once neither to abdicate his power, nor to dilute it by admitting a rival. Accordingly, with mane erect, eyeballs of fire, and a heart swelling with indignation, he bade the cowering Jackall guide him instantly to the spot where he had encountered his haughty enemy.

He was obeyed. The false craven trotted on before with alacrity ; and the mighty Lion followed, lashing the earth with his tail, and moistening the brushwood through which he made his way with the foam that fell in flakes from his parted lips. Their walk terminated near the mouth of a well, towards which the Jackall pointed as the den of the usurper ; and then, declining to advance further, crouched away, leaving the noble and betrayed Lion to terminate the adventure.

With all the impetuosity of rage, indignation, and jealousy, the infuriated animal sprang to the margin of the well ; where, reflected in the clear water, he beheld his own image, and thought that he was face to face with his enemy ; his hoarse and appalling roar of defiance was echoed by the deep murmurs of the tank ; and like many another hero, he leapt at a shadow, and

plunged head over ears into a bath for which he had been perfectly unprepared.

Away sped the Fox who had been contemplating from a distance the success of his stratagem, with his tail erect, and a roguish twinkle in his eye which betrayed his self-gratulation; and affecting not to remark the coldness of his reception, he forthwith laid his paw upon his head, and informed the Majesty of Mouseland of the capture of the rebel Lion.

The intelligence acted like beng on the spirits of the monarch and his court, who sprang from side to side of the palace, squeaking with delight; indeed, the popular commotion was so great that it was not for a considerable time that the Vèzir could command the royal ear sufficiently to suggest the expediency of an early visit to the prison of the captive. When, however, he had succeeded in so doing, the justice of the hint was at once admitted; and in the pride of his little heart the Padishah of the Long-tails summoned the vassal-camel, who bending meekly on his knees, received the royal Mouse upon his hump, where he enthroned himself to the great admiration of the whole city.

“Thrice-honoured animal!” said the exulting Monarch to the patient beast, who with

half-closed eyes, and drooping head, stood quietly awaiting the signal to depart : “ Your’s is no common lot : see that you sink not beneath the responsibility of your office, but look well to your path ; for remember that you bear the weight of sovereignty, and the hope of an entire Empire !”

“ Powerful Padishah !” replied the stupid animal, with a fullness of truth, and a want of tact, which at once demonstrated to the Fox the little probability there existed of his ever rising into favour at Court ; “ My path is easy, and my burthen is light. Were it not, indeed, that I felt your Majesty mount ; and that as you ran up my side, I experienced the same tickling sensation as that caused by those anaseny sikdam — those poor pitiful insects, the forest-flies, when they sometimes alight upon me, I should not have been aware that I bore any burthen at all. Be tranquil therefore, oh, Lord of the Long-tails, for I could carry you round El Caf without feeling your weight.”

As the Camel ceased speaking, the royal Mouse was seized with a violent fit of sneezing ; and the Fox took the opportunity of this fit of sternutation to wipe away the tears of suppressed laughter from his brimming eyes.

What a beautiful thing is truth ! How it always advances a man's interests !

When the party reached the well, the pigmy Monarch descended from his elevated position, and established himself on its margin, whence he looked down with infinite complacency on the drenched and desponding Lion.

“ Boūroum, Seid !*—You are welcome ;” he said smilingly : “ both to our territories and to our tanks. Had you been more courteous, we should have received you in a less inconvenient hall of audience ; but as it is, we have deemed it expedient to steep the bread of disobedience in the waters of defeat, and you must swallow the meagre meal as you can.”

There was admirable policy in this speech of the Padishah's, as your Highness cannot fail to remark ; for, as the Mouse saw no means of delivering his formidable captive, he resolved to make necessity appear design, and to seem to abandon him through displeasure to a fate, from which in point of fact he had no possible hope or prospect of setting him free.

But ere the humbled and exhausted Lion could reply, the Fox approached the well, and, seizing

* Lion.

the royal ear, whispered to the monarch that the friendship of so powerful and respectable an animal would greatly tend to exalt his glory ; and that, if his majesty could induce the prisoner to swear allegiance to the throne of Mouseland, he would undertake to secure his liberation.

“ But, Vèzir of quick wit and sound knowledge, whose head, under the shadows of our greatness, is raising itself to the clouds ;” said the Padishah, with that beautiful modesty and caution for which he was deservedly renowned ; “ Suppose that when once again on dry land, the mighty Seid should laugh at our beards, how could we contend against his furious revenge ?”

“ Bashustun — on my head be it !” was the reply of the councillor : “ The Lion is an honourable beast ; he will disdain a lie : brave to a fault, he will do battle for his new master against all comers ; generous and high-hearted, he will never look back upon the past, for he knows that what is written is written ; and we shall thus secure an ally who will be as a footstool to the throne, and as an eye to the state.”

“ Wallah billah ! it is well said ;” squeaked the willing Mouse ; and then once more address-

ing the Lion, he exclaimed majestically : “ Said we not well that we would leave you here to perish, and to die the death of a dog ? Have you aught to urge in denial ? Does it not depend on us, and on our pleasure, whether you live or expire miserably amid the suffocating waters ? And yet we would fain be merciful, and not see your strength wither, and your eye grow dim. How say you, vanquished Seid, will you become our willing vassal, our loving ally, one of the pillars of our state ? ”

The Lion opened his ponderous jaws to their extremest width, to give utterance to the bitter contempt he felt for the wretched little animal who thus addressed him ; but, alas ! when the words should have come forth, the water rushed down his throat, and he was nearly choked ; and faint, exhausted, and powerless as he was, he felt that in order to preserve his wretched existence, he had no alternative but to swallow an oath, which, however, at the moment, was even more suffocating than the water. When he had done so, the Camel was once more freighted with the load of royalty ; and the train of courtiers having taken the way back to the subterranean city, the Fox at once proceeded to effect the liberation of his new associate.

Not far distant from the well which had snared the Lion to his ruin, was a lake of some extent, whence in times of drought, the husbandmen of the province irrigated their lands by means of engines, which threw the water into small canals that intersected the plain, and increased the vigorous vegetation. One of these channels was in the immediate neighbourhood ; and the Fox lost no time in breaking down the clay aqueduct, and suffering the stream to pour into the treacherous tank, until it overflowed, and the Lion was enabled to walk forth, shake his dripping mane, and warm his trembling limbs in the bright sunshine.

When he had recovered his breath, the first impulse of the generous beast was to make his acknowledgements to his deliverer for so signal a piece of service ; and the modesty of the Fox was so conspicuous in his reply, that the Lion frankly apologised for the contempt in which he had hitherto held all his race, and vowed to him an earnest and eternal friendship.

“ Good deeds, oh Reynard ;” he said gently ; “ ever secure their own reward. Be not disgusted by so trite an apothegm, but ever let it urge you to kind and generous actions like that of this day.”

The Fox could have laughed at the Lion's beard, but he scarcely thought it prudent to do so; and, perhaps, when the singular inappositiveness of the remark is considered, he had some cause for mirth; but, unconscious of the feeling with which his words had been received, the royal animal, as they pursued their way to the palace of the Mouse, related to his companion the treachery of the false and cowardly Jackall; and uttered many a bitter apostrophe on his ingratitude, which, had the recreant overheard them, would have sufficed to kill him with sheer fright.

It is perhaps needless to say that the Fox joined heartily in the anathema, and exasperated still more the anger of the Lion; until having wrought him up to the last pitch of rage, he bade him be calm, for that so black a traitor was not fit to live, and assured him that die he should. He hinted, however, that it would be as well to say nothing on the subject at Court, as the race of Jackalls were under the protection of the Padishah of the Long tails, and that consequently justice must be done silently.

The Lion acquiesced at once; and the ceremony of his presentation having taken place, greatly to the delight of Mouseland, and his

own disgust, he was permitted to retire to his den ; an arrangement highly honourable and considerate on the part of the Padishah, who felt his inability to detain him a moment longer than he chose to stay for the amusement of his new masters.

That very night the Fox supped from the hind quarter of a very lean Jackall ; and the Lion never again encountered the treacherous slave by whom he had been betrayed.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE KINGDOM OF THE MICE—*continued.*

DID your Highness ever experience the shock of an earthquake? Of one of those mysterious convulsions of Nature which defy alike the power and the policy of man — when the whole world appears to be crumbling into dust, and to be insufficient to fill up the yawning chasm, dark and insatiate, which gapes to receive the universal ruin ! When the voice of the human race is but one common shriek of agony ; and the great globe seems to be one common grave ? When not even the prospect of the sherbets of Paradise can quench the hot thirst of terror ; nor the vision of its houri destroy the bitterness of death ? Nay, then, if you have not, my lord has been more favoured than was the Padishah of Mouse-

land when his subterranean kingdom was shaken to its base — his palace prostrated, his cities laid waste, and his subjects destroyed by thousands, and cumbering the streets with their maimed and mangled bodies !

All was consternation among the miserable survivors ; an universal squeak of mourning rent the air ; and fathers, sons, and lovers ; matrons, and maidens, collected about the victims to gaze upon their dead. In despair at so frightful a visitation, the monarch of Mouseland summoned the Fox, the Camel, and the Lion to his presence ; and they came only to find him steeped in sorrow to the very whiskers : — What was to be done ? The noble Seid offered battle on the instant, but against whom was he to fight ? The Camel suggested the erection of a new palace, and the founding of a new city, but where were the architects to plan, and the workmen to build it ? The Fox only advised patience ; and promised to trace the evil to its origin, and to prevent its recurrence.

As all the population of Mouseland had great faith in the power of their Vèzir to fulfil his pledges, they were in some degree consoled ; and many hours were passed in burying the dead, and digging a few underground apart-

ments for the accommodation of the wounded ; when suddenly another mighty crash at a little distance once more overwhelmed them with terror ; and they ran off in every direction to avert the new destruction by which they were threatened.

But on this occasion they were subjected only to alarm ; for the evil had fallen on the colony of their enemies the Jerhuahs ; and they were slowly recovering from their panic when the Fox appeared at their ruined walls, and informed the desponding Padishah that he had discovered the author of the evil to be a huge Elephant, who at sunset emerged from the woods into the plain, and recklessly trod down the roofs of the subterranean cities.

The Lord of the Long-tails trembled as he listened ; but his Vèzir affected to hold their new enemy cheaply, and reminded the Padishah that he had subjugated the mighty Lion—What, then, could he fear ? Nay, for the first time since he had accepted office, he suggested that a new envoy should be chosen by the monarch from among his own nation ; and so composedly did he talk on the subject, that the weak Mouse began to be once more puffed up with pride, and forgetful of his own insignificance ; and in this frame of mind he pitched

upon a young, sprightly, smart-whiskered Bey of the household, whom he furnished with the proper credentials, and deputed his Ambassador.

To the full as vain as his master, the mouse-ling of quality retreated to his hole, where he gave his whiskers a more diplomatic and important twist, smoothed his slender tail into more graceful glossiness, and adorned himself in the most approved manner, ere he departed on his embassy, which he did with a brisk run that promised a speedy return.

The reappearance of the unfortunate envoy took place, however, with even more dispatch than had been anticipated: for the Elephant, amused rather than indignant at the insolence of the spruce-looking little reptile, had only answered his summons by blowing him many yards on his homeward path, with the wind from his mighty trunk; and in sorry plight, as your Highness may well imagine, did the poor dapper diplomatist throw himself down before the carpet of majesty, and tell his tale of disgrace.

“Who can war against his fate, Light of the Earth!” he concluded, as the Padishah bent upon him an eye of disappointment and disgust: “Who can controul the elements? What animal

could have braved the whirlwind by which I was lifted from the earth, flung against the clouds, and swept along over an infinity of space? Ne bilirim — what can I say? The ashes of defeat are strown upon my head — the defilement of disgrace is on my beard — the anger of the Great One of the Earth, the Refuge of the World has clutched my heart, and stopped its pulsations.”

But the Padishah was not to be appeased; the Fox was summoned to the conference, requested to become the executioner of the discomfited Ambassador, (whom he very submissively snapped up before the words were well out of the royal mouth;) and solicited to tender his opinion of the most desirable step to be next taken in this very unpleasant affair.

The wily Vèzir asked for an hour to deliberate; although, feeling convinced that his agency would be required, he had already matured his plans; and at the termination of that period, he demanded from the king a strong detachment of Mice, who were to act solely under his orders.

With this party he at once quitted the ruined city, and advanced to the deep bed of an exhausted river, traversed by a wooden bridge,

which the Elephant was compelled to cross during his periodical visits to the plain. The channel of the stream closed suddenly to the right and left of this bridge, the rocks being high and jagged, and almost meeting over head, not many feet above the level of the water ; and in consequence of this circumstance, the bridge had been flung over a wider portion of the river, and rested only upon a deep chalky vein of soil, running far into the valley, and suddenly terminating in a hollow, not twenty stadia distant from the capital of Mouseland.

On arriving at the bridge, the Fox at once commenced operations by instructing his troops to gnaw partially asunder the ropes and pins which united the woodwork, so as to render it insecure for any heavy weight ; and the consequences of this step are evident. The next time the Elephant endeavoured to pass, his enormous bulk proved an over-freight for the frail fabric, and he fell headlong into the bed of moist chalk, without power to move either to the right or left, where the rocky barrier fenced in the channel.

In this emergency, the sagacity, strength, and intelligence of the animal, availed him nothing. He was fairly in the toils ; and was

only another example among many, of a creature ruined by his own greatness, and destroyed by the very attributes on which he had been wont to pride himself.

Off ran the Fox when he saw the result of his stratagem; and the destruction of half Mouse-land was forgotten in the triumph of such a capture. Many of the dead were still unburied; but their fate was overlooked in the general rejoicing that made the whole Empire one shrill squeak of proud delight.

These things are alike among men and mice, your Highness. Who heeds in the pageant and parade which celebrate a victory, the victims who have fallen to secure it?

The vain-gloriousness of the King of the Long-tails was at its height. He issued all sorts of contradictory orders — commanded and countermanded — and all in order to keep the different animals who had become his vassals, on the run. Here flew a Rat; there rushed a Badger — a Squirrel sprang on one side, and a Chamois leapt on the other; the whole plain was in convulsions; and ever and anon the roar of the captured Elephant came booming along the valley like a thunder-peal.

All this was very delightful, but every plea-

sure must have a termination ; and his Highness the Padishah was partially recalled to reason by a hint from the Fox, that although a captive, the mighty Elephant was not yet a vassal ; and that his subjugation required instant attention.

Unable to controvert so cogent an argument, the monarch at once declared himself ready to be guided by the counsels of his Vèzir ; though he could not avoid reminding him that this was no slight concession from a sovereign who was now lord of the whole brute creation, with the exception of the Elephant, who was then in his toils.

The Fox bowed low, and laughed—but the bow was to the Padishah, and the laugh to himself, and he consequently avoided giving any offence ; while he assured the potentate with all due respect and reverence, that in the event of his inducing the Elephant to acknowledge his authority, he would undertake to release him from his present thrall.

The royal cortège was immediately in motion. First marched two fierce and shaggy Bears, wielding huge staffs, and growling forth the many and mighty titles of the Padishah. Then followed a band of female Monkeys, dancing fantastic measures to the music of a score of

bare-backed Apes. These were succeeded by a company of Porcupines, who shot their quills right and left upon the crowd, which threatened to impede the line of march. Then came a couple of Asses, braying out with lungs of iron the near approach of the Refuge of the World, and Lord of the Earth ; who followed, mounted upon the hump of the Camel, having on his right the merry Fox, to whom the pageant was food for unmeasured mirth ; and on his left the crest-fallen and disgusted Lion, who stalked solemnly along, his heart burning with shame as he remembered how sorry a figure he should make in the eyes of his old acquaintance the Elephant.

We could always support our misfortunes themselves with philosophy ; it is their effect on the minds, and their influence on the opinions of others, that unman us.

A guard of honour, composed of wild Goats, surrounded the mighty monarch ; and immediately behind them came a tall Ourang-outan, carrying a palm-leaf, on which, shaded from the public gaze by fans formed of the beard of the bulrush, lay the three favourite wives of the Padishah ; two more animals of the same description, but of less stately proportions, bore

the slaves of the harem. The light troops were represented by a group of Chamois ; while the heavy regiments were most appropriately composed of Buffaloes ; and in this state and fashion did the King of the Mice journey towards the prison-place of the Elephant ; of whom he no sooner caught sight than he exclaimed in a transport of very natural delight :

“ Why, how is this, oh, Vèzir of power and wisdom ! Have you brought us here only to show us one of our own brethren ? No resemblance can be more perfect ; save that, indeed, nature has been unkind to our poor captive, in visiting him with such a mass of flesh, and such a length of nose ; but these are deformities which, being ourselves happily exempt, we know how to pity in others : had not this misfortune attended his birth, we should have been as like as two drops of water. Speak, cousin ! ” he continued, addressing the enormous animal with a patronising gentleness which drew tears from his wives, and convulsed the Fox with merriment ; “ What would you of us ? ”

No answer was made, for in truth the Elephant did not either see or hear the Monarch ; and was lost in wonder at what this meeting of so many divers animals in his immediate neighbourhood might portend.

Meanwhile the Padishah moved forward, and transferring himself from the hump of the Camel to the capacious back of the Elephant, began to walk towards his head, examining him most minutely, and occasionally switching his tail with self-gratulation and importance; when, unfortunately chancing to pass over a spot where the huge beast was particularly susceptible to the touch, and deemed that some fly had alighted with the intent to sting him, he gave a flap with his long ear, and down fell his majesty into the wet clay!

The whole court was in commotion: the Lady-mice squeaked, and their slaves, as in duty bound, squeaked still louder; the Bears growled, the Asses brayed, the female Monkeys chattered, and the Apes grinned; the Porcupines rolled themselves up, the Lion roared, the Camel screamed, the Fox almost went into convulsions, the wild Goats shook their beards, the Chamois leapt from rock to rock, and the Buffaloes laid down, and began to chew the cud of distress. And in the mean time, the monarch, after a vast deal of scrambling and struggling, got safely out of the mire, and reappeared among his people, all chalk, mud, and misery!

But his was not a soul to be subdued by one

downfall ; and as soon as he could unfasten his jaws, which were cemented together most unpleasantly, and recover his breath, he vowed vengeance on the Elephant, and began to dry his whiskers.

The Fox took this opportunity of coming forward, and assuring his majesty that the crime of the animal had been involuntary ; and of reminding him that the privilege of the powerful was to show mercy, coupled with an intimation that he craved the pardon of the offender in the name of the whole court and army.

Thus urged, the heart of the Padishah softened ; and the Elephant, being very soon convinced by the representations of the Fox, that his only chance of deliverance lay in his swearing fealty to the Lord of the Long-tails, and consoled for his misfortune by the vassalage of the Lion, at length consented to the indignity ; when having administered the oath, the Padishah, yet shivering from his immersion, and considerably shaken by his fall from so prodigious a height, withdrew with all his court in the same order as he had set out ; while the Fox hastily collected together a numerous army of miners, composed of beavers, ferrets, rabbits, badgers, mungoshes, rats, mice, and moles, and set them immediately

to work to undermine the chalk bank which intervened between the channel of the river and the hollow already mentioned.

As they were in immense numbers, laboured heartily, and were considerably assisted by the Elephant himself, he was enabled by sunrise the next morning to force his way through the crumbling barrier, and to obey the summons of the Padishah ; who sat enthroned on an ear of maize, surrounded by deputations from all the vassal-animals of the province.

When he had reached the presence, and made his obeisance, the Fox respectfully advanced to the throne, holding between his teeth a ripe sugar-cane, which he presented to his majesty as a delicious refection, and, moreover, an extraordinary curiosity, which he humbly invited him to inspect. The Padishah, who delighted in novelties, at once declared his intention to examine the gift of his esteemed minister and friend ; and, having given permission to his wives, and the Prince Royal his only child, to accompany him, which they lost no time in doing, he disappeared into the hollow of the cane, followed by his family.

Standing close beside the Fox was a long-armed Ape, his especial slave, who had long

nursed a bitter spite against the whole Empire of Mouseland ; and no sooner had the tip of the last Imperial tail vanished, than on receiving an encouraging wink from the Fox, he adroitly blocked up the orifice with clay, and secured all the royal family !

A low murmur was rising on every side, when the Fox, contemptuously kicking aside the throne of the Mouse, thus addressed the surrounding animals—

“Beasts of the chase, and of burthen ; my most worthy friends and subjects ; I have collected you together this day, through my slave the Mouse, to declare to you how I have earned for myself the sovereignty of the brute creation ; and in order to prove to all animals, from the lordly Lion to the drudging Mole, that neither strength nor insignificance could secure their possessors from my rule, I made my tool of a sorry Mouse. To that weak, pigmy, miserable reptile, have ye all bowed your haughty heads, to save your forfeit lives. Friends and vassals ! The Imperial Mouse has abdicated, the Imperial family is extinct ! *I* am your Emperor ; and I commence my reign by an apophthegm.

“When courage has failed before craft ; and the mighty in frame have been bowed beneath the

mighty in intellect ; the rings of obedience can never be rent from the ears of defeat : and the arrows of ambition will always rebound from the sun of royalty, upon the heads of those who bend the rebellious bow !”

As the self-elected monarch ceased speaking, he gazed around him with a look of proud defiance ; placed his foot upon the sugar-cane in which the unhappy Mice were dying of suffocation, as upon a footstool ; and seemed to dare a dissentient murmur. But none arose ; for the assembled animals, humbled by the consciousness of their disgraceful vassalage to a wretched reptile, of whom the more wily Fox had made first a tool and then a prey ; and, startled into concession by the sudden and unlooked-for assumption of an animal, under whose guile and quick-wittedness they had all severally writhed, could not deny the superiority of their new master ; a superiority which he could make them feel at any moment, and in any emergency, when brute force could not avail : they therefore with one accord offered their obeisance, and acknowledged him as their ruler.

One able diplomatist can secure more triumphs than an army of lances.

PART II.

CHAPTER IX.

“AJAIB—wonderful!” murmured the Tchorbadji as he flung another purse into the lap of the young Greek: “I could listen to her for ever; her voice is like the sighing of the wind through the light branches of the jasmin. Ma-shallah! she is a wonder! What is written, is written—I will purchase this fair slave, mother.”

“May my lord’s will be all-powerful!” gasped out the terrified Nevrestè, as she again prostrated herself to the earth; “had it been any almè of my troop save Mherpirwir and Sèïdika, would I not have given her to my lord for gold? But these two—”

“What of these two?” demanded the Tchorbadji with a lowering brow and a stern gaze;

“ Whose dog are you to thwart me in my humour ? I will purchase the slave for seven purses.”

“ Let not my lord blacken the face of his servant ;” persisted the old woman ; “ the slave is not mine. The Camalcan of Stamboul had heard of the talent of this young Massaldji from the Bynbashi of the troops of Damascus, and he has already paid a heavy price for her to her late master. She is even now on her way to Iskuidar,* where a slave waits to conduct her to the harem of her new lord. How then can I obey ? Am I not as nothing in this matter ?”

“ Tarik—beware !” frowned the Tchorbadji ; “ that you deceive me not ; there are no feet so swift in all Roum but that the cord is swifter. The slave pleases me, and I am ready to pay her price.”

“ Will my lord heap ashes upon the head of his servant ?” asked Nevrestè ; “ Can the fig-tree bear grapes, or the olive produce dhourra ? How then can I give up a maiden who is not mine ?”

“ And what says the Massaldji herself ?” asked the Tchorbadji, looking kindly on the disguised Greek ; “ Would she be content to in-

* Scutari.

habit my harem, and to weave the threads of eloquence into the web of fiction to please the ears which would be ever open to listen?"

"The Tchorbadji is lord;" said Maniolo-polo, as calmly as his agitation would permit him to reply; "If the Camalcan of Stamboul be content to leave his slave unreclaimed, then are her poor services at his will. Let the Pasha (may his house prosper!) decide in this matter."

This suggestion at once recalled the worthy Janissary to his reason, and reminded him that he could not take the beard of the Minister in his hand, as though it were that of an oda-bashi* or a naib;† and determined therefore to rid himself of the affair at once, he said coldly:

"Min Allah! why should I trouble my lord the Pasha for this thing? Are there not many Massaldjis in the land? What is the spoil for which I should contend? Avret der—it is a woman—it is bosh—nothing."

For a moment there was silence; and Maniolo-polo watched with considerable anxiety the countenance of the Tchorbadji, who continued to smoke with great energy, and a contraction of eye-brow by no means indicative of internal satisfaction; while the almè slowly rising from

* Corporal.

† Cadi's clerk.

the floor, at the signal of Nevrestè, prepared to renew their dances. A wave of the host's hand, however, prevented their purpose; and muttering something of the lateness of the hour, he gravely descended from the sofa, and without again glancing towards the dancers, abruptly quitted the harem.

When he had fairly disappeared, all was once more hilarity; and the young beauty on the sofa smiled out her pretty scorn at the sudden whim of the Tchorbadji, who had poured forth his soul on first sight of an awali, whom she vowed, by the grave of her mother, had a light in her eyes which was nothing less than modest.

Nevrestè ventured to remonstrate, and to uphold the propriety of her handsome companion; greatly to the amusement of the lady, who called the dark-browed awali to the cushion at her feet, where she playfully toyed with the long tresses of raven hair that fell upon her shoulders, and bade her tell how many hearts she had broken since her bright black eyes had learned the art in which they were such adepts.

Maniolopolo, to whom his position was irksome in the extreme, despite the small white hand, and soft accents of the fair wife of the Tchorbadji, answered her by a timid glance, as

he resumed his zebec ; and having preluded for a moment in melancholy cadences, as though sad recollections had been awakened by the question, at length murmured out in a subdued voice his low and thrilling reply. The air which he selected was wild as the summer wind — it was a Sciote melody ; and it brought with it a thousand memories of the past, which heightened its expression of energy and passion.

THE ALMÈ'S SONG.

Who loves the Almè ? Oh, mock me not now
 With the light of that eye, and the calm of that brow ;
 For thee, such as thee, were those blessed hours made,
 When sunshine is looked, and when music is said ;
 But the Almè, though bright her young beauty may be,
 Can ne'er know the bliss that is lavished on thee !

Who loves the Almè ? Her step may be light,
 Her form may be graceful, her eye may be bright,
 Her ear may drink in the most eloquent words
 That e'er swept like a spell o'er the young spirit's chords ;
 But the Almè's crushed heart to despondence is vow'd
 When her brow is unveiled to the gaze of the crowd.

Then ask not the Almè, proud beauty, to tell
 The tales of the past in her memory that dwell ;
 Rather bid her forget that on earth there can be
 A being so loved and so lovely as thee ;
 Lest, wild with despair such a contrast to meet,
 She fling off her garland, and die at thy feet !

A stifled sob met the ear of Maniolopolo as he laid aside the instrument ; he involuntarily turned in the direction whence it came, and saw Mherpirwir slowly moving away ; and his heart smote him that in order the better to sustain his disguise, he had suffered himself to be betrayed into any expressions calculated to wound the fair and gentle girl, who had so zealously embraced his cause, and risked her own safety to conduce to his happiness. Nevrestè had served him for gold, and had secured the wages of her concession ; the other almè had simply and blindly fulfilled the pledge of obedience to which they were vowed : but there was something at the heart of the young Greek that told him of a deeper and a more anxious interest on the part of Mherpirwir. True, she was assisting him to look upon one whom he loved—but the experience of the fair dancing-girl had taught her no tale of constancy on the part of lovers. In the sky of her destiny she had seen ray after ray of the young heart's brightness clouded by the vapours of distrust and change ; she had heard murmurs from the sweetest lips in the world, and seen tears in the loveliest eyes ; and Mherpirwir was no logician. Maniolopolo was a Greek, a Giaour ; a despised one like herself.

He could worship the wife of the Moslem only as a bright shape limned on the summer cloud—a laughing light on the sunny wave—something impalpable and transitory—while, could *she* win him!—But here the heart of the girl beat painfully, and a deep blush burned for an instant on her brow—No, no; she would think no more; she *dared* not.

Some portion of the truth had already intruded itself on Maniolopolo; he had known the almè only a few hours, but there was a softened light and a timid expression in her deep eye when it was turned on him, that revealed her secret.

His melancholy ballad had smitten the fair girl with a painful conviction which had never before so thoroughly forced itself upon her. Who was she that she thus had dared to hope that she might appropriate the heart of one like Maniolopolo! Was not the very name of an almè the byword of scorn and contumely? Were not all the troop at the beck of every stranger who spread gold upon his palm, to divert his idleness, and to obey his behests? What had she to do with love, with tenderness, with passion? Alas! nothing—Maniolopolo had laid bare before her the deso-

lation of her lot ; she might weep away her spirit, and steep her heart in tears ; there was no hand to wipe them away, no voice to soothe, no arm to uphold her : and for a moment as the dancing-girl moved from the side of the young Greek, a cold chill stole through her veins, and if she could at that instant be said to *feel*, it was the hard, cold, stern rigidity of the marble which bears the impress of beauty without its vitality. But the death-like paroxysm, the strong spasm of despair, endured not long : the victim was too young to be thus emancipated from suffering ; the spirit-thrall had more bitter pangs in store ; and the awakening from this transient immobility was more crushing than years of murmured suffering.

The night was far advanced when Nevrestè gave the signal for departure ; and the wife of the Tchorbadji dismissed her guests with courtesy and gifts far exceeding their expectations ; nor did she invite their return, for the admiration of her lord had been too manifest towards the disguised Sëidika to render that personage a welcome guest : and the troop had already passed the threshold of the harem, and Maniolopolo was carefully guiding the footsteps of the trembling Mherpirwir along the rude

pavement of the steep street which led to the Theriaki Tcharchi, while the old woman followed closely behind them, when they were suddenly met by one of the chaoushes* of the Pasha, preceded by a seratch† bearing a paper lantern, who approaching Nevrestè exclaimed :

“ Bè hey — What’s this, mother ? You are abroad at an unseemly hour with your flock of peris : I have been to the Tcharchi, the devil’s nest, in which you have housed yourself (and Wallah billah ! ’tis no pleasant task to thread that quarter of the city after nightfall !), on a mission from his Highness the Pasha (may his beard flourish !). He has heard strange tales of one of your almè, and he honours you by a summons to his harem to-morrow evening at sunset : so prepare your moon-faced beauties, and be careful not to fail at the appointed hour ; but seize your good fortune with the grasp of security, and when the river in the west yonder runs gold, see that you stand before the door of the Pasha’s harem, or the grave of your father will be defiled, and the soles of your feet unfitted for speedy travel.”

The old woman bowed her obedience, and murmured out a thousand assurances of her de-

* Officer of the household.

† Servant of a bey.

light at the summons; and when the chaoush and his attendant had passed on, she moved to the side of Maniolopolo, and whispered: "Walah! your star is in the ascendant, young sir; your kismet is propitious; but is your heart strong, and your pulse steady? Sen bilirsen — you know best. For my own part, I will trust you. I sell you my neck for two purses, and the present of the Pasha; take care that I do not make a bad bargain, and find it in the noose through any folly of your mad passion."

"Korkma—fear not, mother;" said the young Greek; "For my own sake, *and for her's*, I will look thrice at my words before I utter them. What is written, is written — my felech hath placed me in your hands, and opened the door of the Pasha's harem to my eager foot. What says the proverb? 'When you find water, drink it; when you find a bridge, pass over it.' I found the water of despair, and drained a deep draught; and now I find the bridge of hope, I am resolved, and ready to cross it."

"Sen ektiar der — you are the master;" said Nevrestè: "and I am your slave. And now, here we are at the Tcharchi, where you can deposit your disguise until to-morrow — Aghour ola—Heaven speed you in your purpose; for

you have a bold spirit and a true heart, giaour though you be."

With this blessing Maniolopolo took leave of the old woman ; and having silently pressed the slender fingers of Mherpirwir within his own, retired to the apartment where he had assumed his disguise ; and having laid aside the veil and antery, and replaced them by the turban and beenish* in which he was accustomed to traverse the city at night, he hastened from the Theriaki Tcharchi which was already loud with revelry and riot.

* Cloak.

CHAPTER X.

IT was a glorious noon ! The sun rode high in heaven ; the bees were busy among the bean-flowers ; the butterflies flitted hither and thither, like blossoms loosened from their stems by the summer-wind to be the bright companions of his sport ; the golden-armoured fish leapt high above the silver bosomed fountain, and fell back glittering with the light ; the sky was a vault of turquoise ; and the leaves sang a pleasant melody at the bidding of the breeze. Nor was this all ; for the laughter of childhood and the low sweet voice of woman came softly to the ear, as Saïfula Pasha, with a slow step and a preoccupied spirit, silently paced to and fro the tree-shadowed terrace that stretched along beneath the windows of his harem. In one hand he held his amber-

lipped chibouque of jasmin wood ; the other was buried amid the folds of his girdle ; his lips were slightly compressed ; his head declined ; and at times he drew a long breath like one whose spirit was over-laden with thought.

His selictar-aga* and his chibouque-bashi† followed at a short distance, but did not even converse in whispers ; so bewildered were they by the sudden restlessness of their master. At length the Satrap paused, and pointing to a spot where the shadows fell deep and cool, a slave obeyed the signal, and spread his carpet, upon which he seated himself, while his attendants with officious zeal arranged his cushions, prepared his pipe, and performed for him all the little offices of attentive zeal.

“ Mazzouk ;” said the Pasha, when his selictar-aga alone stood beside him, all the other attendants having respectfully retired : “ there is a weight upon my spirit ; the labours of the divan have wearied me. I hate the contact to which I am subjected by the supineness of that dog the Cadi, who is not worth the pillauf he destroys — Mashallah ! He is an ass, and the father of asses !”

The Satrap paused, and threw out a long thin

* Sword-bearer.

† Keeper of the pipe.

thread of smoke from his chibouque, which curled for a moment about his bright and jetty beard ; and the selictar-aga bowed his acquiescence in the opinion of his master with an unction which admitted no doubt of his sincerity.

“ To see the divan,” pursued the Pasha ; “ one would imagine that the city was one vast Timerhazè !* They are not men whom he brings before me for judgment ; haivan der—they are animals—creatures from whom you may wring their heart’s blood more easily than their piastres—Haif ! haif !—shame, shame ! I have sat there three hours this day in the name of the Prophet, and not a single purse has passed into the treasury.”

“ Mashallah ! He is a dog, and deserves the cord ;” said the attendant coolly.

“ Am I not the shadow of the Padishah ?” continued the Pasha in a low tone of concentrated anger ; “ And shall he not have justice ? Let him look to it if things do not change. Inshallah ! I wrong no man.”

A few moments of silence succeeded, and again the Satrap spoke : “ And this Frank, this infidel dog, of whom he told me in full divan

* Mad-house.

not a month back, who scattered his money in the city streets, and made an okkal* of his dwelling, where all who came were welcome; what has become of him? With whose hattisheriffe† has he passed the gates? By Allah! there has been treason—and the Cadi has played the codgea-basha, and levied tribute for himself.”

“ Bashustun — on my head be it! My lord the Pasha has his foot on the neck of the ghorrumsak;” said the selictar-aga, turning aside to spit out his contempt of the Cadi.

“ Have you heard aught of this spendthrift Frank?” asked the Pasha; “ If it be as the Cadi says, he must be well known in the city.”

“ Your slave has heard that the stranger is no Frank;” was the reply; “ but a rascally Greek from the Islands, who has been laughing at the beards of the True Believers, and calling himself a Gaul.”

“ Ha! is it so?” said the Satrap, a gleam of pleasure passing over his swarthy countenance; “ Then by the soul of his mother, he shall pay dearly for his insolence. A Greek! Where is the karatch?‡ He shall pay it to the uttermost

* Tavern.

† Firman.

‡ Capitation tax levied on raïahs.

para; aye, to the uttermost. You shall talk with him, Mazzouk; and you know your duty."

The selictar-aga laid his hand upon his heart, and smiled.

"Shall we have our faces blackened by a raïah?" pursued the Satrap: "a vile slave who was born under the yoke? and whose cunning has taught him to take shelter in the name of a Frank Khawaji?* And a Gaul too! Were there not Russians and English enough between Scandaria and Stamboul, but he must call himself a Gaul!"

"The slave is as keen as a makaisa;" † said the selictar-aga, selecting a simile which was as professional as it was apt; "Had he written himself either Russ or Briton we might have read the cheat, for these Giaours are all as like from Ramazan to Ramazan, as the pearls in my lord's turban; and they who have once known one of the unclean dogs, can tell him again even should they meet on the edge of the Great Desart; but the Gaul is as changeful as the shadows of the tempest on the waters of Boulac; and there is no swearing to his beard."

"And how know you this?" asked the Pasha, amazed at the erudition of his attendant; "Have

* Merchant.

† Short-sword.

you plunged your fingers into the same pillauf with the Unbelievers that you can tell the signs of their uncleanness?"

"May the hand of your slave perish if it hath done this!" said the functionary solemnly: "Whose dog am I that I should defile my own grave? I learned the secret from a hadji who had travelled to the far east; and who told me that a mighty Schah, who knew little of the infidel nations of the west, and who sought to learn in what the Giaours of those lands of darkness differed the one from the other, employed a famous painter, who could cunningly spread the tints of the rainbow over the surface of the papyrus, and create bright shapes that wanted only breath and life to make them equal to the houris, to trace for him a Giaour of every land within the circle of El Caf, that so he might, should any of these restless barbarians travel to his court, be able at once to tell to what nation he belonged. But I weary my lord——"

"Go on;" said the Pasha; "I listen."

"The painter obeyed the Imperial command;" pursued the selictar-aga with encreased animation, encouraged by the unusual attention of his master; "and he soon laid upon the step of the throne so many tight-vested and whis-

kered effigies that the Schah had nearly expired with mirth ; but at length he came to one where the Giaour stood unclothed, holding in his hand a web of silk ; and he demanded from the painter in what land the men thus unblushingly dispensed with the garments which they possessed the means of fashioning. ‘ May my lord’s shadow never decrease ! ’ said the painter : ‘ In no country of the west where the Giaours have learned to weave the produce of the worm or the cotton tree, do they thus deprive themselves of the fruits of their industry. I have therefore laid before the eyes of my lord, the garb of every nation save one, for elsewhere the garment of to-day may be worn to-morrow ; but with the Gaul it is not so ; and had I made for him a dress to any given measure, though at sunrise he might have been distinguished by it from all the nations of the earth, at sunset it would have borne no more resemblance to his actual appearance than the lotus bears to the olive tree, or the stork to the blue dove. I have therefore given him the material unfashioned, in order that my lord the Schah may imagine for him, each time that he looks upon the picture, a new and distinct costume.’ Thus then, Light of the Earth ;” continued the selictar-aga, bowing low

before his master ; “ I deem that the Greek slave has called himself a Gaul, dreading that your penetration and knowledge would have detected the imposture had he declared himself to be the subject of any other land.”

“ Hai, hai—true, true ;” said the Satrap with a grim smile ; “ but Alhemdullilah — praise be to Allah ! he will not escape even thus. We are not to suffer the sand of the desert to be flung into our eyes by a wretched raïah. Frangi domous — the Franks are hogs, be they Russ or Gauls ; and the Greeks are dogs, and the fathers of dogs. He shall pay the karatch either with his hands or feet !”

“ Bashustun — on my head be it ;” said the selictar-aga ; and the Pasha smoked on with renewed vigour ; satisfied that the worthy functionary would keep his word.

“ Mazzouk ;” said the Pasha after a long pause ; “ your face is whitened ; you have charmed the ear of attention, and turned the sands of the hour-glass to gold. I knew that your arm was strong, but I have only learnt to-day that you can think as well as strike. I am weary of the tales told in my harem ; they are over-ripe pomegranates, and pall me. Have you no legend of war and strife, such as may make

me believe while I lie here upon my cushions, that I see the roving Tartar with his tall cap and slender lance; the hardy Scythian with his huge bow grasped like a toy; the Arab with his unerring djerrid; or the false Greek with his long spear gleaming in the sunshine, as he flies before the Allah hu! of the conquering Moslem? I want a tale like the neighing of a war-horse, or the blast of a trumpet; I love the far-off rumbling of warfare; and had I not been a Satrap, by the soul of my father! I would have been a warrior!”

At the conclusion of this noble and safe burst of pugnacious oratory, the Pasha resumed his chibouque almost fiercely; while he twirled his moustache, and looked defiance at the selictar-aga; who, having respectfully pressed the hem of the great man's garment to his lips, stood for a moment buried in thought; and then, obeying the gracious gesture of the Pasha, seated himself on the edge of the carpet, and at once commenced his narrative.

CHAPTER XI.

“ I MUST transport my lord to the farthest East, that I may tell him that which he may not perchance have heard ; for, should I engage his ear with a tale of the wars of Roum, and of the glories of the conquering armies of the Padishah, the Descendant of the Prophet, and the Refuge of the World, should I not heap ashes upon my head, when my lord knows all things, and his servant is less than a dog before him ? ”

The Pasha drew in a long stream of the sweet-scented gebeli, and nodded his approbation ; while the selictar-aga, encouraged by the gesture, thus proceeded.

“ Half the world had bowed beneath the strong right arm of the wonderful Subuctagi

and his warlike son, the bright-eyed Mahmoud, when his grandson Musaoud ascended the royal steps of the throne of Ghizni. It was a moment of trial, for the brave Azim Schah Siljochi, the lord of the Toorkomans, had already subdued the kingdoms of Bokhara and Samarcand, reaping their harvest with the sword, and awakening their echoes with the clash of steel, and the thunder of prancing hoofs. He was born for battle ; the storm and the tempest rocked him to rest in his infancy ; he laughed as the red lightnings danced around him ; and chased the thunder-bolt when it fell ruin-laden into the valley. He breasted the waves when the wild sea was chafed into anger ; and leaped the precipices in whose depths death lay coiled like a serpent.

“ When his boyhood was spent, and that his upper lip was fringed with the beard of strength, he became only more bold and dauntless. The spear and the sword were dearer to him than the zebec or the hookah ; and the trumpet-blast sweeter than the voices of the awalis. His ambition was as a fiery torch which spread devastation before it ; and his name was the watchword of the warriors when they rushed upon the weapons of the foe.

“ Musaoud had not yet girded on the scymitar

of sovereignty when the warlike Azim pressed onward, even within the limits of his empire; and he no sooner became the right hand of power than he resolved to stem the torrent of invasion ere it reached the footstep of his throne; and, for this purpose, he called to him the noble Altasash, the brave viceroy of Charism, who had long panted to cross swords with the victorious Prince of the Toorkomans.

“All Ghizni was convulsed with pride and admiration, when the eagle-browed Altasash galloped like a meteor towards the plain where his gallant army was assembled. His steel-clad warriors were counted by thousands; and one universal shout of welcome, which seemed to shake the astounded earth even to its centre, hailed him as he bounded forward with his son Kousruf by his side. He was the idol of the people; and there stood not one among that closely-serried host, who would not have freely shed his blood for the brave and high-souled Altasash.

“Mothers blest him as he passed, and held their infants high above their heads that they might look upon the hero; the aged wept that their strength was spent, and they could not follow him to battle; while they who had hi-

therto resisted the temptation, flung down their peaceful tools, or instruments of sport, and grasping a ruder weapon, rushed to the ranks of battle.

“ Winter had already stretched his icy hand over the earth, but the gallant viceroy heeded not its pressure ; the enemy strode on ; and he disdained to yield before the perseverance of the conquering Azim. As the armed host swept forward, all was wretchedness before and about them ; the trees stretched forth their leafless arms towards a murky and leaden sky ; the winds howled through the valleys like savage monsters in search of prey ; the torrents, swoln with rain, leapt and roared as they escaped from their channel, and bore on their turbid waves, the wreck of many a stately tree torn from its roots, and hurled to ruin by the tempest ; fragments of rock, wrenched away by the storm-gusts, fell clattering into the defiles of the mountains ; and, at length, amid all this desolation the gaunt fiend Famine stalked through the camp, and shook his bony hand above the host. But the heroes of Ghizni defied him to the last ; the ardent Al-tasash met him as the rock meets the tempest ; and the troops, encouraged by his example, armed themselves with resolution, and cried

shame upon the craven who dared to murmur !
The mountain-path ——”

“ Mashallah !” interrupted the Pasha, with a most unequivocal yawn ; “ I have mistaken my taste ; I have already heard enough of this second Rustum :* let him rest in peace, whether he died of want or a keen steel, which is a fact that, thanks be to the Prophet, I know nothing about. The day is wearing, and the shadows are growing longer ; we will hasten the evening meal, and leave your heavy warriors to their mountain-path.”

The disconcerted sword-bearer did not venture to reply ; but silently motioning to the attendants, who were lying half asleep upon the turf at a distance, to approach and do their duty, he slowly followed the Pasha to the palace, with a clouded brow, and a most unenviable feeling of mortified vanity.

As they passed beneath the windows of the harem, the sweet voice of Katinka came upon the wind ; and the Satrap involuntarily stopped to listen. As the song proceeded, his eye lightened, and his lip quivered with pleasure ; and, when it ceased, he moved on, and without delaying a moment in his own apartment, at once

* A celebrated eastern hero.

beckoned to him his Aga Baba, and entered the harem.

The pensive Carimfil, as she rose to welcome him, smiled faintly, and then relapsed into her usual gloom ; but the young Greek girl turned on him a glance of fire that seemed to be reflected on his soul ; and her ready hand arranged his cushions, and her soft voice greeted him with a feeling not to be misunderstood.

Coffee was served, and the graceful Katinka was seated at the feet of her friend in respectful silence, when the Pasha, whose idleness required amusement, after graciously imparting to his fair listeners the recent failure of the selictar-aga, turned towards her smilingly, and bade her put the sword-bearer to shame, by one of those tales which fell from her lips like wild honey from the trunk of the fig-tree.

The beautiful slave answered by meekly pressing her hands upon her bosom, and giving herself up to thought ; and as the Pasha looked upon her, he swore by his beard that she was more lovely than a houri, but as he did not put the vow into words, none were aware save Katinka herself that she was the subject of his reverie.

Slowly raising her head like a blossom that

has been bent with rain, after the lapse of a few moments the Greek girl prepared to speak ; and fixing her deep eyes on the Pasha, while she clasped one of the fair hands of his young wife within her own, she thus obeyed his bidding.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER.

THE Pasha Talât was the Satrap of a powerful province too far removed from the magnificent City of the Three Seas, the capital of the Lord of Life, to be frequently convulsed by the factions which must ever rend the metropolis of a great Empire. His chaoushes knew no other lord, save by the voice of rumour; they had never laid their foreheads in the dust before a greater than himself; and they served him with the blind obedience which was their duty.

Every karabash* and astrologer of the province had predicted for him a long life and a prosperous fortune. His spahis† were alert and brave, and threw the djerid with all the art of

* Wise man.

† Horse soldiers.

Arabs ; his palace was the noblest in the city, and his kasr* the strongest in the mountains ; his mir-akhor† was justly proud of his unrivalled stud ; his yuzbashis‡ were faithful ; and the strange merchants who from time to time traded in the bazār, repaid with a willing and liberal hand the protection and justice which they ever found in the divan of Talāt Pasha.

But the Satrap possessed one gem which out-valued the diamonds of his treasury, and the revenue of his pashalik. His beard was already marbled with gray when the prayer of his heart was answered, and he became the father of a lovely girl. Pure as the blossoms of the Indian Agla, lovely as the bursting rose when it drinks in the dew-drop of the early dawn, and graceful as the fawn which sports by its mother's side beneath the forest boughs, Maitap§ seemed to have come on earth to shew the world how fair the peris of Paradise may be. Her mother loved her as the bulbul loves the moonlight ; her father clung to her as to the principle of his existence ; and as years went by, and time only rendered her more faultless, the fame of her rare beauty was noised abroad ; and many a poet

* Castle.

† Head-groom.

‡ Captains.

§ Moonlight.

rhymed the name of the Pasha's daughter to a thousand expletives of harmony and love.

Fathers sued for their sons, and mothers visited the harem of the Satrap to satisfy themselves that rumour had not outrun reality ; but the proposals of the one, and the scrutiny of the other alike availed nothing ; the Pasha loved his child too much to thwart her fancy ; and the glorious pearl of the province only wept when they talked to her of quitting her father's roof.

Among the numerous suitors whom her loveliness drew around the carpet of the Pasha, was the dark-eyed Youssouf Bey, the only son of a wealthy Satrap whose province adjoined that of the father of Maïtap. The country rang with his praises : he had read the Korān thrice through ; he had transcribed the poesies of Hafiz on the tablet of his memory ; while yet a youth he had mortally wounded an Arab Schiek in a skirmish whence older and stronger warriors had fled ; to the courage of a man he joined the softness of a woman ; and when the proud Pasha asked for him the hand of the Satrap Talāt's daughter, his heart was as free from any impression as the mysterious sea over which navies have passed without leaving a trace behind ; but unlike the illimitable ocean, that heart had never yet been

laid bare to any contact; and when the fair Maïtap was mentioned to him as his future bride, he listened in silence, and taught himself to love her in hearkening to the hyperbolical panegyrics of the strangers who visited the palace.

But his father's rank and his own merit availed him nothing. Presents both rare and costly were sent to the harem of Talât Pasha; his mother, anxious for his happiness, employed every wile in order to ensure success; the father of the young beauty expatiated on the advantages of the connection; and every female tongue in the city was loud in his praise; yet he met no happier fate than his less worthy rivals. The young beauty listened, wept, and finally refused to allow the name of Youssouf Bey to be mentioned in her presence.

Opportunities had not been wanting when she might have satisfied herself of his rare personal advantages, but she had avoided them; nor did she approach the lattices of her apartment until she ascertained that, hopeless of success, he had quitted the city.

The failure of the young and gallant Bey acted powerfully on the spirits of the other suitors of the lady; they felt that where he had gathered only ashes, they could secure no trea-

sure; and one by one, slowly and reluctantly, they withdrew their claims.

Light was the heart of the fair Maïtap when the last hoof-stroke of the lover-band resounded through the court-yard, and the rider galloped away in search of a more willing bride; and as she hung upon the neck of her father, and buried her sweet face in his bosom, she murmured gentle words of tenderness and trust that drew tears from the eyes of the Pasha, and blessings from his lips.

Less happy was the son of the Satrap Sarim; no fear of failure had gone with him to the palace of Talât, and his rejection had fallen upon him like a stroke of destiny. From the hour that he lost hope, he felt that to live without the beautiful Maïtap would be impossible; and as he sped homeward, he breathed an earnest and a solemn vow that he would win her, or die.

But how?

Youssouf Bey was young and sanguine, full of life and love, rich, talented, and handsome. If ever hope brushed away a dark shadow from the tablet of despair with her sunny wing, it was for such as he!

Despite his love for his daughter, Talât Pasha could not conceal the feeling of disappointment

with which he saw the young Bey depart. He could hope no brighter fortune for her than that which she had just rejected; and he was mortified also that the haughty suitor had not made a single effort to change the temper of the chilling beauty; but had bowed beneath her decision without a word of remonstrance.

Time, however, which softens all things, gradually diminished the regret of the Pasha, and he forgot to sigh when the name of the Satrap Sarim was mentioned in his presence. Nor could he forbear rejoicing, when the labours of the divan were over, that the sweet smile of Maitap still welcomed his arrival in the harem, and shed a ray of light over his existence; and, eventually, he almost learned to rejoice that his lovely child was either colder or more capricious than the rest of her sex.

The usual quiet monotony of the Satrap's palace was one morning disturbed by the intelligence that a strange merchant had arrived in the city, and established himself in the principal khan, with an assortment of stuffs such as had never before been beheld in the province. One of the household slaves had lingered to see many of the bales opened, and gave a most exciting description of their contents, as well as of the Kha-

waji himself; and the fair Maïtap, who had become wearied alike of her tusbee,* her birds, and her flowers, amid the languor of a warm day of summer, was not sorry to find a new source of amusement in the hyperbolical details of the voluble Saidè.

“Mashallah!” pursued the slave, as she perceived that her beautiful young mistress was leaning forward upon her cushions to listen; “I never saw such silks, nor such eyes! One of them worked with gold, in the cypher of the Padishah on a ground of bright orange; and another of clear blue rayed with silver. And then such a beard! as black and as glossy as a bird’s wing: and the most delicate muslins for yashmacs!† you might see the very colour of the lips they covered. And, wallah billah! a voice that goes through and through you, as though it spoke to your soul rather than your ears. Ajaib — wonderful! why he has brought into the city the lading of nine camels; and he walks like a Vèzir.”

The fair Maïtap could not restrain her mirth, and clasping her little hands, she gave way to a hearty burst of graceful laughter. “And how call you this wondrous trader, Saidè? And

* Chaplet.

† Veil.

whence comes he? From the coral caves of the deep sea, or the fleecy vapours of the blue sky? For such eyes, and beard, and tones as these can surely not belong to a mere mortal."

"Ne bilirim — what can I say?" replied the slave; "He seemed to me to be mortal, aye, and to feel like a man, for when Giadilla, the Kadenhahia,* of the Cadi's daughter, who was looking on while he was arranging his goods, declared that she should fall sick if she could not persuade her mistress to purchase for her a calemquer,† which marvellously struck her fancy, the young Khawaji folded it in an instant and placed it in her hand, with a smile as bright as the colours in which it was painted, though the astonished Kadenhahia told him that she had not a para in the world."

"Your merchant-prince is indeed a marvel;" smiled the young Hanoum; "but I would learn his name."

"They call him the Khawaji Zadig, and he comes from Bassora. Mashallah! what an eye he has, and a forehead like a Padishah! Giadilla was in luck to day; her kismet won a gift

* Nurse.

† Handkerchief worn on the head.

for her from the whitest and the softest hands in the world."

"Nay, you are mad, Saidè;" said the fair Maïtap striving to call up a frown; "One would think that no strange merchant had ever before visited the city, or rewarded the insolence of an idle nurse with a head-dress; let me hear no more of this — it is unseemly."

The rebuked attendant bowed her head in silence, and shortly after quitted the apartment.

An unusual restlessness suddenly seized the Pasha's daughter; she rose from the sofa; thrust her delicate feet into her pearl-sprinkled slippers; tried all her instruments one after the other, and rejected each in turn; complained of an oppression in the air; discovered that the water in her goblet was heated and sickly, and that the musk-lemons which were scattered over the room affected her head; and finally quarrelled with the exquisite cachemire that was folded about her brow, and declared that, since she had looked into a mirror, she had never worn a colour that became her.

The inference was simple; a new cachemire must be purchased; and she had already examined and rejected every shawl in the bazār of the city, save those of the strange merchant.

She would dispatch a slave to bid the Khawaji send his choicest merchandise to the palace ; and yet, no — how could he divine her tastes ? He would probably retain the very thing she wanted, and she should be wearied by looking over a heap of uninteresting lumber. Truly, this was a dilemma. The bazār was at the other extremity of the city ; the streets were hot and close ; and the very wind seemed to have been fanning the sun, and to have carried away its warmth, for it fell on the brow like the pressure of a heated hand ; but should she delay until the cool hours, the light would fail, and she could no longer distinguish the colours of the web — Besides, some Emir's wife might carry off the very cache-mire that she coveted ; and this reflection was so alarming, that the fair Maïtap at once clapped her hands, and desired the slave who obeyed the summons, to order her araba, to bring her *feridjhe** and *yashmac*, and to prepare her two principal attendants to accompany her to the bazār.

Having made these arrangements, the gentle girl subsided once more into composure ; resumed her tusbee, and passed its perfumed beads rapidly through her fingers, as she mur-

* Cloak.

mured out a love-ballad which by some extraordinary fatality just then recurred to her memory; and smiled once or twice as though some pleasant thought had grown with the melody. Her resolution was a holiday for the two favoured slaves who were to attend her, for curiosity had grown very powerfully in the harem since Saidè had told the tale of the good-fortune of the Cadi's Kadenhahia with the new Khawaji; and while some of the fair slaves dreamt of painted calemquers and embroidered silks, others were indulging visions of dark eyes, ruby lips, and tones of music.

The araba was soon ready, for Zobeidah and Shereen, the chosen pair who were to profit by the sudden whim of the young beauty, had urged the Arabadje* and the Serudjes† to their greatest speed; and Maitap was still busily engaged in arranging, with more than her usual exactness, the transparent folds of the envious veil which was to shroud her loveliness, when the richly gilt and silken-curtained carriage rattled to the door. Four mounted negroes surrounded it; and ere long it was jolting along the rude pavement of the city streets.

* Coachman.

† Grooms.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER.—*continued.*

THE Khan of Damascus, as the caravanserai was called, in which the Merchant had taken up his abode, was situated near the southern gate of the city, many stadia from the palace of the Pasha ; and more than once during her drive the heart of Maïtap beat more quickly than usual, as she asked herself why she thus indulged a caprice, as extraordinary as it was unaccountable. Frequently was she tempted to change her purpose, and simply to visit the bazār ; but a resistless impulse urged her to persevere in her original intention ; and while this mental war was waging in her heart, the araba drove into the yard of the caravanserai.

In the centre of the court a handsome foun-

tain poured forth its volume of bright sparkling water ; and in one corner rose a small edifice dedicated to the sick birds brought by the hunters and peasants from the mountains. A pair of noble eagles, with their feathers ruffled by illness crouched heavily upon the roof ; a lame stork was visible through one of the casements ; and a number of small birds, of different descriptions, were perched on the eaves of the building.

But Maïtap saw neither fountain nor infirmary ; her eyes were fixed on a young man, who stood earnestly conversing with a spahi,* and whose extreme personal beauty exceeded any thing which she had previously imagined. As she lay back upon her cushions, with her feather-fan before her face, she could indulge her admiration without a fear of his observing her ; and this feeling of security betrayed her into a reverie which was only terminated by the harsh voice of the Aga Baba, who reining up his splendid Arabian close to her side, inquired her further pleasure.

“ Yavash, yavash — softly, softly ;” she said, starting at once into a full consciousness of the error into which she had been betrayed ; “ I have not yet quite decided whether I shall ven-

* Cavalry soldier.

ture to encounter the fatigue of bargaining with the khawajis to-day ; my head aches, and my eyes are heavy."

" We will then return at once to the palace ;" said the negro ; and he had already gathered up his bridle, when the lady exclaimed peevishly.

" And yet when I have submitted to the tediousness of traversing the city, I may as well profit by the exertion, or I shall be compelled to repeat it. Inquire, therefore, for the store of the merchant Zadig."

The Aga Baba obeyed ; and the araba slowly proceeded to the quarter indicated, Maitap never once removing her eyes from the figure of the stranger, and marvelling much whom he could be. The slaves who sat at her feet detected the sudden preoccupation of their mistress with the intuitive penetration of the sex ; and although they uttered no comment, they glanced expressively at each other, and then indulged themselves in gazing on the same object, with an interest and admiration only inferior to her own.

When the carriage stopped at the entrance of the store, great was the satisfaction of the Pasha's daughter on remarking that the handsome stranger hurriedly terminated his conversation with the soldier, and turned his steps in the

same direction; and the cloud which had gathered upon her brow was dissipated in an instant, when with a low and respectful salutation, he followed her into the spacious warehouse, and stood silently with downcast eyes, awaiting her commands.

This then was the Merchant Zadig !

For the first time the proud beauty felt ill at ease : she had forgotten why she came there, and what she sought ; and she remained earnestly gazing upon the khawaji, without making an effort to give even the semblance of accident to her visit.

The stranger was about five-and-twenty ; his eyes were as black as ebony, and as bright as sunbeams ; his port was haughty ; and his brow well became the pride that sat on his finely-moulded lips. He wore a turban of which the cachemire was almost above price ; his flowing robe was of crimson silk, rayed with orange ; and in his rich and well-adjusted girdle he carried a hand-jar sparkling with one immense ruby, on which was graven the cypher of the Prophet.

The silence became embarrassing ; and to dispel it, Shereen, the favourite attendant of the lady, took up a gorgeous shawl which was flung upon one of the bales, and began to utter

“ Mashallahs !” and “ Pek Guzels !”^{*} innumerable, as she examined its pattern and texture. The impulse was as successful as it was inartificial, for it withdrew the eyes of Maïtap from the Merchant, and broke the spell that had been suddenly cast over her. Annoyed and mortified at her own folly, the Pasha's daughter at once assumed a haughtiness foreign to her natural character ; and glancing round her, she said coldly :

“ Khosh buldûk—you are well found, khawaji ; my slaves tell me that you have cachemires of price among your goods, which out-value any in the bazârs of the city. I may perchance become a purchaser ; let me, therefore, at once see the most costly of your bales, if I have heard the truth.”

“ Alhemdullilah !” murmured the Merchant : “ your highness does my poor store but too much honour ; and I and all that I possess are at your command.” After which courteous declaration, he clapped his hands, and a couple of Numidian slaves, clad in dark blue tunics, with scarlet turbans, instantly appeared from behind the screen which veiled an inner apartment. At a silent signal from their employer each

^{*} Very pretty.

seized a corner of the tapestry curtain, and held it high above his head, while the Merchant in a low and respectful voice begged the lady to favour him by passing into the chamber where he had secured the most costly of his merchandise from the contact of casual purchasers.

Thrall'd, and governed by a curiosity which had now become uncontrollable, the stately Maïtap scarcely hesitated a moment; and followed by her two attendants, she crossed the threshold, and the screen fell behind her.

The apartment in which she stood was spacious, and lighted by three windows overlooking a court planted with maple and acacia trees; these windows the luxurious Merchant had veiled with curtains of pale pink silk that gave a sunset hue to every object in the chamber; but the surprise of the Pasha's daughter amounted to wonder, as the gorgeous Numidians, after glancing towards their master, spread over the handsome divan of crimson velvet, a covering of delicate white satin wrought with gold: and heaped upon it cushions of needle-work, such as even the loved and capricious Maïtap had never before beheld.

As the young beauty sank upon the glittering sofa, the Merchant still stood before her with

bent head, as though he dared not meet the eyes which rested on him; then slowly retiring, he indicated to his slaves the bale which was to be opened for her inspection; while, in order to while away the time, he spread out before her several caskets filled with gems, which flashed in the soft and shaded light. Tusbees of pearls, each the size of a pea; bodkins of brilliants; rings of rose diamonds, charms, and amulets, and gilded toys of every description, enough to turn the head of a score of Eastern women.

Amid all her admiration the fair daughter of the Pasha remarked, however, that there was one casket which the khawaji had not opened, and which, when he had once or twice accidentally taken it up, he had hastily laid aside. There needed no more to excite in her bosom a strong desire to examine the contents of the casket; and when the same circumstance again occurred, during a search which the Merchant was making for a case containing some valuable turquoises, she could not refrain from pointing towards the mysterious subject of her thoughts, and inquiring why that also had not been submitted to her inspection.

“ Lady ;” said the khawaji : “ all that I have is at the bidding of your highness, and even un-

worthy of your attention. Of what is mine I would hold back nothing. Your slave lives but to obey you, and his face is whitened by your approbation ; but the contents of this casket are not mine ; I hold them only in trust for one of my most honoured customers ; and I would not lay before you a jewel of which I cannot make you mistress.”

“ But I would see it nevertheless ;” urged the fair Maïtap, as she extended her hand towards the Merchant.

Zadig bowed submissively, and having loosened the clasps of the casket, he laid at the feet of his visitor a superb hand-mirror, of which the frame was of chased gold, profusely studded with brilliants. A cypher of small emeralds ornamented the back of the glass, and a heavy tassel of gold depended from the handle ; and, altogether, the toy was of so costly a description that the Pasha’s daughter could not restrain an exclamation of delight.

“ Can you really not dispose of this pretty anali, Effendim ?” she asked eagerly.

“ Alas ! I have told your highness only the truth. It was wrought in the bezenstein of Stamboul for a young and wealthy Bey, who is about to form his harem ; and is destined to reflect the

beauties of his fair bride. He has already urged its arrival more than once, and I dare not disappoint him."

"Y'Allah! it is a pretty toy, and the Bey has taste. How call you him, khawaji?"

"Youssouf Bey, the son of Sarim Pasha"—replied Zadig.

"By the soul of your father, you may then sell me the anali;" said Maïtap, with a proud toss of her pretty head; "for the bride will not put off her slippers in the harem of the Satrap's son before you have had time to make a dozen such."

"Asteferallah!" murmured the Merchant; "Your highness must have been misinformed. The young Bey made a journey to the province of your noble father, (may his years be many!) and abode, as I have been informed, some days in the Pasha's palace; and it was on his return thence that he learnt the happiness which was in store for him."

Maïtap blushed as she listened, until the roseate flush could be distinguished through the muslin of her yashmac; and she suffered the splendid anali to fall from her hand upon the cushions. It was reverently raised by the khawaji, and replaced in the casket without a word

from the young beauty ; for a grasp like iron was on her heart. Had her pride indeed won for her no greater triumph than this ? Was she forgotten in a day ? replaced in a month ? remembered only with a smile ?

The reverie would have lasted longer, but chancing to look up, and meeting the fine dark eyes of the Merchant, Maitap suddenly resumed her self-possession, and gave full employment both to his patience and his taste, in examining one after the other all the shawls in his warehouse.

It was a pretty scene. The lady reclined upon her cushions of party-coloured satin, with one white arm fully revealed as she extended it to touch the different shawls which were spread out before her by the handsome trader ; who, resting upon one knee on the edge of the carpet, took them from the hands of the Numidians who stood close behind him ; while the attendants of the lovely girl, shrouded in their dark and ample mantles, were seated a little space apart. The soft and dreamy light mellowed the atmosphere about them ; and the rainbow-like tints of the shawls which were scattered through the apartment, lent a gorgeous finish to the picture.

The sudden entrance of the Aga Baba gave a

new feature to the aspect of affairs. The lady held in her hand a magnificent cachemire of exquisite texture, and as the screen was lifted, she said suddenly :

“ It is well, Effendim ; tell me therefore the lowest price that you will take for this which I hold, and our bargain will soon be terminated.”

“ Sixteen purses :” replied Zadig coldly, and without raising his eyes ; “ and were it not that I am honoured by the notice of your highness, I should demand twenty.”

“ And this ?—” and she pointed to another of inferior quality ;

“ Will not count beyond nine ; though the wreath of nirgis* is woven by the hands of the peris.”

“ They are mine :” said Maïtap, as she rose to depart ; and the Khawaji having folded them in two separate handkerchiefs of coloured muslin, intended as a present to the attendants, placed them in the hands of the Aga Baba, as the murmured “ Affiet ollah — much pleasure attend you,” of his fair visitor fell on his ear.

In another moment the araba rattled through the wide gate of the khan.

The Pasha's daughter never once spoke during

* Narcissus.

her homeward drive, but as she stopped at the door of the harem, she unfolded the shawls from their coverings, and flinging the painted handkerchiefs into the laps of her attendants, left the peri-woven shawl which had been her last purchase, in the hands of the Aga Baba when he assisted her to alight.

The negro looked up ; and while a broad smile displayed his large and glittering teeth, and his huge eyes were distended to their utmost size, he bent his head, and muttered something which passed for thanks.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER—*continued.*

FROM this day the nature of the beautiful Maïtap underwent a total change. She was restless, unhappy, and capricious. The very sun did not shine in the heavens for her as it had once done; her flowers had no fragrance, her birds no song. She drooped like a caged nightingale — she withered like a blighted rose. When her maidens strove to entertain and arouse her, it was no longer with light tales of love and laughter to which she had hitherto listened with a proud feeling of amused disdain, but with legends of fear, and sorrow, and despair; for then she wept sweet tears over the griefs of others until she soothed her own. Once only did she repeat her visit to the khan, and she

found a void. The merchant Zadig had left the city ; and there remained no trace of him in the caravanserai. Many were the tales told, however, of his liberality, his charity, his gracefulness of manner, and his warmth of heart ; and by some extraordinary fatality not one of them failed to reach the ears of the pensive beauty.

For hours did she sit calling up before her mental vision every word, and look, and action of the young Khawaji ; true, she had seen him but once, and yet, she felt that there was an expression in his deep eyes which had entered into her soul ; and then she remembered how soon and how easily the haughty son of Sarim Pasha had forgotten her, and she wondered within herself whether she should fade as early from the memory of the Merchant.

One day, when she was as usual indulging these speculations, a slave entered her apartment, and presented to her a small packet which had been brought to the city by the Emir-hadji of a caravan that had proceeded on its way at day-break. She opened it hastily, and having torn away the numerous coverings in which it was enveloped, unclasped a crimson casket, and started with surprise on discovering the well-known anali of the merchant Zadig. Upon the

mirror lay a strip of paper, containing simply these words: "For the beautiful and honorable lady, her highness Maitap Hanoum, from the most devoted of her slaves."

The Pasha's daughter blushed until brow and bosom burnt with the crimson tide that rushed tumultuously from her heart. Her first impulse was to conceal the paper from the profaning eyes of her attendants; the next would probably have been dictated by her pride, and have compelled the restoration of the gorgeous gift; but she knew not where to find the donor; and as she gazed into the jewelled mirror, she thought that her face had never seemed so fair. Involuntarily she sighed, and glanced down upon the shawl which cinctured her waist; she had long ceased to wear any other; it was that which she had purchased of the handsome stranger; it covered the heart in which his image was enshrined.

The proud beauty was subdued. As she held the sparkling anali in her hand, she felt that all those whom she had wounded by her coldness were revenged. She loved! And whom? Not a high-born Bey, in whose harem she would have moved a queen; whose rank would have satisfied the ambition of her father, and the

hopes of all her family ; but a Khawaji, a trader ; whose soul was in his bales, and whose thoughts, instead of dwelling upon her, must be engrossed by the eager thirst of gain. And yet, the anali ! Had he forgotten her, or had he valued his gold above her smiles, would he have thus sought to win them ? But what availed the fact, pleasant though it was ? Alas ! they might never meet again ; and as this startling contingency forced itself upon the reason of the pensive girl, a large tear sullied the surface of the mirror, and a sigh heaved the shawl that bound her slight and fairy form.

Several weary months sped by ; new suitors presented themselves at the carpet of the Pasha ; new instances were made to the drooping Maïtap ; but all were alike unheeded ; and the unhappy Satrap began to fear that Monker and Nakir* were hovering about his child, and that the golden lamp of her young existence would be extinguished.

Every species of diversion permitted in the harem was lavishly essayed ; dancing-girls performed their graceful feats, and singing-women pealed forth their love-ditties unheeded ; the massaldjhis became distasteful, the guests wear-

* Angels of Death.

some; and, at length, any further attempt to arouse the melancholy Maïtap from her languor was abandoned in despair, and she was left to dream and weep in peace.

Talât Pasha had an inordinate taste for jewels; many a place was obtained, many a favour granted, many a cause, no longer doubtful, decided in the divan through the magical agency of these costly treasures. It was therefore with no small interest that he learnt the arrival of an aged Diamond-merchant in the city, with jewels such as had never before been looked upon in the bazārs of the province. His selictar-aga talked to him of the emerald-hilted handjars, the golden-scabbarded scymitars inlaid with precious stones, and the sword-belts worked with pearls; his cafèjhi-basha of the zarfs,* lipped with rubies, and chased with cunning workmanship; and his principal chok-hadar† of a mantle of fine European cloth, whose collar was a perfect galaxy of jewelled light; his codgea-bashi had an audience to decide on the tax which should be levied on the sale of the goods; and his Saraf‡ to learn whether he should raise a new contribution in the villages on the produce of the coming harvest.

* The stands in which the coffee-cups are placed.

† Cloak-bearer.

‡ Banker.

The curiosity of the Satrap was excited ; and a summons was sent to the Merchant, who, with ready obedience, presented himself at the palace of the Pashalic on the going-down of the sun, when the gates of the bazār are closed, attended by a couple of slaves bearing the most rare and costly of his merchandise.

His venerable appearance interested every one in his favour, and the gifts which he lavishly distributed to the chaoushes of the household tended to deepen the feeling. He was apparently of great age ; his eyebrows and beard were as white as the snows of Mount Ararat ; his tall figure drooped in the shoulders, like that of one on whom the weight of years pressed heavily ; but his step was firm though slow, and his dark eyes had a light in them, which told that the soul yielded not to the weakness of the body.

Many and profound were the prostrations with which he entered the apartment of the Pasha, who received him most graciously, and at once motioned him to display his treasures.

Rumour had not exaggerated their value or their beauty ; and the audience was prolonged to an unusual length, without any appearance of weariness on either part. The Satrap in-

quired the route of the caravan with which the Merchant had travelled, the appearance of the cities that he had passed, the country that he had traversed, and the tribes whom he had encountered ; while every interval was filled up in examining the jewels and weapons, and in commenting on their cost and workmanship.

The Pasha made several purchases, for the prices of the trader pleased him as much as his merchandise ; and when, at length, he received permission to depart, and that he had laid aside his cases, and delivered them to the care of his attendants, a chaoush of the household conducted him with much courtesy to the door, a politeness which he was not called upon to perform gratuitously ; and thus his “ Oghour-ola—Heaven speed you,” was very sincere, as the Khawaji stepped across the household.

The Pasha lost no time, when the Merchant had quitted him, in passing into the harem, in order to display to his daughter the jewelled toys of which he had just made the acquisition ; and, as she languidly received those which were destined for herself, and raised the hand of her fond father to her lips in acknowledgment of his indulgence, the Satrap, anxious to amuse her melancholy, commented on the noble port, and

liberal dealing of the strange Merchant. For a time she listened listlessly, but at length she became interested in the description of the **Khawaji** and his merchandise; and she silently resolved to summon him on the morrow. She was weary of the monotony of the harem; and the examination of the glittering stores of the stranger promised at least an hour's amusement.

When the Satrap had retired, the fair girl dismissed her slaves, for the evening was spent; and flinging back the lattice of a casement which opened on the garden of the palace, she leant out to listen to the song of the night-bird, to inhale the perfume of the flowers, and to blend her sighs with the fall of the fountain, and the whispering of the wind among the leaves.

It was a glorious moonlight! The shadows lay long and dark, while the lines of silver that were traced upon the earth, looked like fairy-plans for some new and bright creation: fleecy-clouds at times floated over the graceful orb, and dimmed its beauty for a moment, as the gossamer veil of a young bride softens the loveliness which is but heightened by its partial eclipse. All around breathed tenderness and peace; and the tears that fell slowly on the cheek of **Maïtap** in that still hour, were devoid of bitterness. Her

pride slept ; she did not ask her heart to lay bare the mystery of its enthrallment, but she yielded to the sweet sadness that stole over her — and again the spirits that she had stricken were revenged !

Daylight spread over the eastern heights, draping them in a mantle of sober gray, whose hem soon grew into a belt of sheeny gold ; gradually the sky brightened, and the flowers raised their heads, and wept their perfumed dew-tears on the earth ; the distant lowing of the cattle came on the wind ; the twittering birds gave music to the woods ; the basin of the palace-garden became a gilded mirror in which the purple lotus gazed till she became enamoured of her own beauty ; and then, like a discordant tone, jarring through the sweet harmony of nature, came the voice of man ; and once more the world awoke ; and life, with all its cares and fears, its jealousies and strife, renewed its struggle.

It was on a terrace, shaded by lime-trees, whose blossoms were vocal with bees, and gay with the graceful rose-laurel of Eurotas, that the Pasha's daughter received the Merchant. She was closely veiled, as were the slaves who attended her ; and the venerable Khawaji was conducted to her presence by the watchful Aga Baba.

The gray beard and reverend appearance of the stranger were not however calculated to alarm the jealous guardians of the Pasha's harem; and accordingly the Aga Baba, who had already feasted his eyes on the glittering merchandise of the stranger, and received a backshish* which perfectly satisfied all his ideas of expediency, soon wandered away among the trees, leaving the interview to the inspection of two of his subordinates: who, in their turn, plunged deeper into the shade; and contenting themselves with remaining within sight of the fair groupe, soon bent their dark brows upon their breasts, and slept profoundly.

Jewel after jewel was looked upon, and laid aside; toy after toy was examined, commented on, and replaced in its casket; until at length the eye of the lady was attracted to a small case of crimson velvet embroidered in seed pearls; which, with a singularity that at once reminded her of the young Merchant of the khan, he put aside as often as it met his hand.

“And that pretty casket which you have not yet opened;” she said gently; “what does it contain?”

“It was brought hither by mistake, Effen-

* Present.

dim;" replied the venerable khawaji; "it is not a jewel; it holds nothing which can interest your highness, or I should long ere this have laid it before you; it is not an article of merchandise—in short, it is bosh—nothing."

"The case, at least, is prettily imagined;" said the spoiled beauty, who had never learned to brook opposition; "and somewhat costly for such poor contents. You will at least suffer me to examine the embroidery."

The Merchant looked embarrassed; he lifted the casket as if to present it to the lady, but he made no effort to obey her wishes; twice he appeared about to speak, and then checked himself as though he feared to give utterance to his thought; and all this time the hand of the Pasha's haughty daughter was extended towards him.

"Ne bilirim—what can I say?" he faltered at length; "The casket is not mine; it has come here by the power of my unlucky felech;* I am responsible for its safe and secret delivery—and——"

"And you take me for an Aga of the Janisseries, ready to see treason in a diamond; or for a codgea-bashi, eager to levy a tax on your

* Constellation.

merchandise, is it not so ?” asked Maïtap, half amused and half annoyed at this unusual opposition.

The gray bearded Khawaji bent low and deprecatingly before her.

“ Janum sinindar — my soul is your’s ;” he said humbly ; “ my life and all that I possess are at the bidding of your highness : but I have led a long life of probity and scorn of evil ; and I have pledged myself to the owner of this casket that no eye——”

“ Enough, sir, enough :” interposed the lady haughtily ; “ I need no khodjè* to read me lessons of propriety and honour. The time passes ; and the road hence to your khan is long and wearisome ; I will not detain you here.” And she waved her hand with the majesty of a Sultana who desires solitude.

“ Dismiss me not thus, Effendim ; not thus, by your soul !” exclaimed the Merchant imploringly : “ Whose dog am I that I should dare to call a cloud to your bright young brow, and to light your eye with anger. Rather let me be forsworn for ever !” And as he spoke, he tendered the casket to the Pasha’s daughter, with a fixed and earnest gaze that drove back the warm blood to her heart, she knew not wherefore.

* Tutor.

For a moment she hesitated whether she should condescend to avail herself of the extorted permission of a mere trader to examine the mysterious casket: she felt that she ought to refrain, and to reject his tardy concession; but her curiosity was more powerful than her pride; and averting her eyes that she might not encounter those of the stranger, beneath which she was conscious that she quailed, she took the case from his hand, and without allowing herself to deliberate for a moment, pressed back the clasps.

As the lid flew open a faint cry escaped her; and she rivetted her gaze on the contents of the little casket with an eagerness that betrayed her emotion not only to her attendants, but to the Merchant also. Yet she cared not for this: she gave it no thought; she was unconscious that any eye was on her: she was under the influence of a sudden spell; and several moments passed ere with a deep blush, and a feeling at her heart which was strangely compounded of happiness and anguish, she roused herself sufficiently to ask in a tone which, while she intended that it should be cold, was only gentle:—

“It is a fair portrait; whose may it be? If

indeed the daughter of Talāt Pasha may be permitted such a question."

"Lady;" said the Khawaji; "Merhamet eylè bendènè—have pity on me; I am withered by your frown. I will lay bare my heart before you that you may read it at your pleasure. The portrait which you hold in your hand is that of Youssof Bey, the son of Sarim Pasha of the next province, and it resembles him as one——"

"Nay, nay; you strive uselessly to deceive me;" exclaimed Maitap sternly; "the turban is indeed that of a Bey, and the costume is rich and costly; but the features are those of a Shawl-merchant at whose store I chanced to alight a few months since. He was called Zaidig."

"I dare not gainsay your highness;" gravely replied the Khawaji; "it is possible that the face may resemble the man you mention, whose soul is brightened by your remembrance; but I have told only the truth when I assure you, lady, that the portrait is that of Youssof Bey, painted by a cunning Frank, and destined for the young bride, whom the noble Pasha (may his prosperity increase!) has just chosen for his son."

“Now, by the grave of your father! you have a false tongue:” exclaimed the maiden with a burst of sudden passion; “for that same Merchant when he visited the city many months back, told some of my slaves that this Bey was even then about to take a wife, for whom he had purchased some idle toys that had attracted their notice. How then may your tale be true when it is so tardy?”

“Neither the merchant Zadig nor myself have dared to prophane your ear with falsehood, Effendim;” calmly rejoined the Khawaji; “it is even as we have both stated. The Pasha has long been earnest that his high-born son should bring a bride into his harem; and—and——”

“And what?” urged Maïtap impatiently.

“May your slave perish if he offend you;” said the Merchant; “but it was rumoured in the province, where I chanced then to be sojourning, that the young Bey had yielded a willing and eager assent to his noble father’s wishes when they pointed towards ——” And again the Khawaji paused.

“Speak!” murmured Maïtap with a slight accent of scorn.

“It was said,” pursued the stranger; “that the Pasha’s hopes had fixed themselves on the

lovely daughter of the high-born Satrap Talāt, the far-famed Maïtap Hanoum——”

“Who cared not to be bartered like a bale of coveted merchandise, against the pride and power of an unknown suitor ;” haughtily interposed the lady. “And what followed?”

“The Bey returned to his province ;” continued the Merchant ; “silent, gloomy, and sad ? He spent his time principally in riding over the country alone, with a rapidity and perseverance which exhausted his gallant Arab ; or among the spahis of his father, who adored their young commander with a devotion for which I have no words ; he avoided the harem of his mother, and the divan of his father ; he grew dreamy, and misanthropical ; and he seemed to endure existence rather than to enjoy it ; when he was suddenly aroused from this unnatural stupor by a renewal of the subject of his marriage. He acquiesced, however, with an indifference which proved that his heart was not in the compact ; and the bride was chosen, and the presents made, and the very day was named when she was to be conducted to his harem ; but then the torpid heart of the Bey aroused itself, and he fled — fled like a delhibashi from the city to the mountains—and the young cheek

of the maiden was wet with tears, and the lip of the mother trembled with reproach and wonder ; but the wretched young man did not re-appear for days, and he returned only to deepen the regret of his betrothed, for the worm of sickness was feasting on his brow, and dimming the lustre of his eye ; and it was vain to talk of love to one who seemed to have been stricken by Asraël."

" But the rose returned to his cheek, and the light to his eye, was it not so ?" eagerly murmured Maïtap, with her gaze rivetted on the picture.

" Slowly, imperfectly:" replied the Khawaji : " Lady, it is not easy for the eagle who has once soared towards the sun to live contented beneath a lesser light. He is once more in the palace of his father ; once more in the harem of his mother ; listening to their arguments, acceding to their entreaties, and prepared to fulfil the contract even at the expence of his happiness. He cannot give his heart to his young bride ; he has laid it at the feet of one who has rejected the offering ; and thus he searches the world for toys and trifles to fill the thoughts which might otherwise dwell upon his coldness."

" Toys and trifles:" echoed the fair girl un-

consciously, as she grasped the portrait more closely : and the nerving herself, she asked timidly ; “ And is this really the resemblance of Youssouf Bey ? ”

“ As like as the shadow of the blue heaven on the surface of a lake ; ” replied the Khawaji : “ it wants but breath and words to be himself.”

“ And does he send her this when he loves her not ? ” asked the maiden, rather communing with herself than addressing her companion ; “ Alas ! she will become as wretched as the golden gu-nech-tchichey* which follows the proud sun through the hot hours of day, regardless of its scorching beam, and unheeded by the object of her fond idolatry.”

The Khawaji listened in silence ! He felt that he was not required to comment on the soliloquy of the lady, and he was discreet enough to occupy himself most assiduously in the rearrangement of his merchandise. It was well that he did so ; for in a moment the proud beauty became conscious of her indiscretion, and hastily and haughtily turned her gaze upon the Merchant, as if to note the effect of her unguarded

* Sunflower.

exclamation; and the feeling of relief was comparatively great with which she saw that he too had been preoccupied, and that her words had passed unheeded.

Again it was the Aga Baba who terminated the interview. His heavy step was heard upon the terrace path; and with nervous eagerness the lady selected a few jewels, and began to bargain with the Merchant. The affair was soon terminated, for the Pasha's daughter made but a faint shew of resistance to the price demanded by the trader; and it was not until he had departed that she perceived that in the hurry and excitement of the last few moments, he had left the portrait of the young Bey in her possession, and had carried away the empty casket.

Her first impulse was to forward it to the khan by one of the negroes of the harem; but a reluctance to part from so striking a resemblance to the individual who had so long haunted her dreams, coupled with the interest flung over the picture itself by the romantic story of the suitor whom she had discarded, perhaps too hastily, tempted her to retain it for a few hours. The Merchant would doubtlessly discover his loss when he replaced his goods in the store at the caravanserai; or, should he fail to do so, she

could restore it early on the morrow ; and while she mentally discussed the expediency of this arrangement, she slipped the picture into her girdle, and pillowed it against her heart.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PASHA'S DAUGHTER—*continued.*

WHEN the young beauty awoke on the following morning, after a bewildering dream in which the son of Sarim Pasha had sold her a shawl that had the portrait of a grim and hideous negro hidden among its folds ; and Zadig the Merchant had seated a fair girl upon her carpet whom he told her was his bride ; she began to reproach herself for a weakness which it was no longer time to subdue ; and the blush of pride dried the tears of reluctance with which she enveloped the portrait of Youssouf Bey in a painted handkerchief, and dispatched it to the Khan of the Jewel-merchant by the hands of her favourite Shereen. But her resolution was formed too late, and her heart's best prayer was

granted when the confidential slave returned with the information that the strange Khawaji had left the city at daybreak with a caravan which chanced to be passing.

There was no remedy ; and the portrait of the handsome son of Sarim Pasha remained in possession of the Satrap's daughter. For a while the fair Maïtap appeared to have drunk at the fountain of a new existence : her voice once more awoke the echoes of the harem into music, and her graceful laugh pealed through the gilded chambers ; her step again became as the step of the chamois, and her eye as the beam of the young day when it breaks over the world.

But this spirit-joy endured not long ; and only a few weeks had passed when the Pasha's daughter fell into a deeper and a more hopeless melancholy than any beneath which she had yet bent. Nothing aroused her save an allusion to the Satrap Sarim or his family ; and though she never uttered the name of Youssouf Bey, her fair cheek flushed, and her dull eye lighted up as her maidens discussed in whispers the subject of his long-protracted marriage.

Eagerly did she welcome the wandering pilgrims, dervishes, and other holy men who passed through the city ; her purse was ever

open to their necessities ; and thus the palace of Talât Pasha was besieged by all the idle hadjis* who visited the holy tomb of the Prophet, either in expiation of their own sins, or of those of their wealthy employers ; but vainly did the fair girl receive, and assist, these pious and needy wayfarers, for not one of them brought tidings of the Merchant Zadig.

Despairing, and fading slowly away like a sun-struck blossom, the melancholy Maïtap at length resigned herself to the solitary and unhappy fate which had been brought upon her by her own pride, and only prayed to die ; and in this frame of mind she sent to ask an interview with a celebrated Dervish, who for the last few weeks had established himself in a ruined tomb beyond the walls of the city.

Her request was refused, her summons was unheeded ; the holy man had taken up his abode in that place of death because he had done with the world, and the world with him ; the enjoyments and vanities of life were alike obnoxious to his love of solitude and peace ; and the refusal was even stern with which he answered the entreaty of the sinking girl.

This unexpected difficulty augmented the de-

* Pilgrims.

sire of the maiden to converse with the ascetic recluse ; and when a second invitation had met with a like repulse to the first, she told the tale of her disappointment to the Pasha with many and bitter tears ; and early on the morrow the unyielding Dervish was commanded to present himself at the palace of the Satrap.

As the day broke a couple of chaoushes passed the gate of the city, and bent their steps towards the ruined tomb in order to compel the attendance of the Dervish, should he still refuse obedience : but the caution was unnecessary, for as they approached the building, the tall figure of the recluse, looking dark and solemn in the cold gray light, appeared at the portal of his inhospitable dwelling, and slowly moved towards them.

A courteous “ Khosh buldûk—You are well-found ; ” from the functionaries of the Pasha was answered by the cold “ Khosh geldin—You are welcome ” of the stranger ; who stalked along in the direction of the city without turning a second glance on his attendants.

The Dervish was a man of middle age, whose dark piercing eyes were overshadowed by thick and hanging brows ; and whose upper lip was hidden by a mass of coal-black hair which co-

vered his chin, and fell in long and wavy curls below his girdle. His khirkheh* was of coarse and heavy cloth, and his head-dress drawn deep upon his forehead; his step was firm and lofty, like that of one who had declined all further struggle with the world rather from disdain than fear; and there was an air of self-centered haughtiness in his whole manner and appearance which won for him an involuntary respect to which his lack of years did not entitle him.

He was received by the Pasha with indignant coldness, for all the father had been aroused within him by the uncompromising fanaticism of the devotee; and yet the noble bearing of the Dervish asserted its power even over the chafed temper of the Satrap; and he soon found himself, he knew not how, rather seeking to conciliate than to reproach. There was a spell also in his rich deep voice, which, even in the few words that he reluctantly uttered, had a strange effect upon the Pasha—It was like a note of long-forgotten music—it awoke pleasant but untangible memories; and bewildered the spirit while it charmed the ear.

After a brief interview with his host, the

* Large dark cloak.

Dervish was conducted by the Aga Baba to a garden pavilion whence the languid eye of the fair Maïtap loved to wander over the fairy wonders of the blossom-laden parterres ; and where her pale brow was fanned by the perfumed breeze, which came to it freighted with the spoils of the orange-flower and the jasmin. She had been prepared for his visit, and had cast over her head a long veil of delicate white muslin which fell like a cloud about her, and made her beauty almost spectral ; about her neck hung a string of precious pearls, from which was suspended a treasure to her still more precious, the portrait of Youssouf Bey ; or, as to her it ever seemed, of the young merchant Zadig, which was hidden beneath the folds of her robe, whose tint was of the softest blue that ever spread its azure over the vault of heaven.

As the recluse reached the threshold of the pavilion, he stumbled, and would have fallen, had not the ready hand of the Aga Baba grasped his arm ; but recovering himself in an instant, he bent before the lady with silent and deep respect ; and then tardily, and as it seemed, reluctantly, obeyed her bidding ; and advanced to the centre of the floor.

“ Holy Dervish ;” commenced the Pasha’s

daughter in a low faint murmur ; “ Forgive me if I have disturbed your solitude : I am unworthy to intrude upon your thoughts, or to entreat your prayers — and yet, if to solace a breaking heart, and to gladden the poor remnant of a life which is fast ebbing away, be a work fitted to your piety, you will not grudge me the few hours of communion which I have been eager to ensure. Allah buyûk der—the angels of death are hovering over me, and the light of my lamp is well nigh extinguished ! Will you not speak peace to my soul ere it is called to the giddy bridge of Al Sirat ? Will you not——”

“ What my poor prayers may effect shall be freely given, lady ;” slowly replied the Dervish : “ even now I will ask peace for you.” And waving his hand as if to deprecate all further parley, he turned his face towards Mecca, and sank upon his knees.

The maiden looked on him as he knelt with a feeling of deep and solemn interest ; the slaves withdrew to a small inner apartment at a signal from their mistress ; and the Aga Baba, to whom the scene afforded no amusement, and whose cupidity was not awakened by the poverty of a poor Dervish, while his vigilance appeared to be to the full as unnecessary as his atten-

dance, quietly walked away to terminate an unfinished party of tric trac* with one of the chaoushes, on which depended a case of sweat-meats presented to the attendants of the Pasha by a departing guest.

The prayer of the Dervish was probably fervent, but it was short; for the deep stillness amid which he could distinctly hear the painful breathing of the maiden had not endured many instants, when he rose from his humble posture only to assume one equally reverential at the feet of the gentle girl, the edge of whose veil he pressed to his lips with all the devotion of a hadji at the Prophet's shrine.

"You are too young to die, lady;" he whispered, in a tone as low and gentle as her own; "The bright world, with all its buds and blossoms, its sunshine, and its bliss, was made for such as you. The grave is for the gray head and the worn spirit—despair is for the wretched and the desolate—you should be the child of laughter and of hope. Life has yet much to charm one so fair as you are."

"Bir chey yok—there is nothing:" replied the maiden sadly: "I ask only for peace—for

* Backgammon.

forgetfulness; and I shall find them in the grave."

"Forgetfulness!" echoed the Dervish; "And what thought can have been traced upon the lily-leaves of a mind so bright and beautiful as your's, so dark as to make memory a blot? Y'Allah! were every mortal spirit but as pure, the wezn of the Prophet had been an idle toy."

Maitap listened in wonder! The austere devotee instead of threatenings was shedding sunshine over her soul; and she would not interrupt him by a word.

"Had such been possible;" pursued the Dervish, in one of those deep whispers which are the very voice of passionate tenderness from the lips that are dear to us, but which are merely music when murmured by a stranger to whom no chord of our heart responds: "Had such been possible I should have said that your sickness was of the spirit; that the sosun* had a canker hidden beneath its leaves; but this cannot be—the beautiful daughter of a powerful Pasha can never sigh away her youth in disappointment"—and he paused, and looked so earnestly upon her, that the crimson flush which spread over her brow and bosom was visible through her

* Lily.

veil. “It cannot be — or, alas ! I should have deemed that your malady was the same as that of one who is dear to me as a brother, the unhappy Youssouf Bey, who loved you, lady, as he loved the bright heaven above him—as something hallowed — something holy — who would have poured out his best blood before you, if so he could have won one smile — one word from your sweet lips — who would do so still, even for a lighter boon.”

The maiden gasped for breath ; “He must not — he dare not — he would break the heart of his young bride, who has loved him, and trusted in him.”

“No bride will ever tread his harem-floor, if she come not from beneath the roof of Talât Pasha ;” said the Dervish hastily and earnestly ; “He has sworn by the soul of his father, and by the grave of his mother, that he will win no other.”

“Oh, say not so !” exclaimed Maïtap, passionately pressing her clasped hands upon her heart, as she remembered the Merchant Zadig ; “Oh, say not so ! He is vowed to a gentle girl who would wither beneath his coldness ; and her misery would be *my* work. Bid him wed her, love her, cling to her through every change of fortune, and make for himself a happiness which

"I shall never know on earth." And as she uttered the last words in a low murmur that could scarcely be heard at the extremity of the apartment, her head sank on her breast, and a large drop stole unbidden to her eye.

"You love another then !" said the Dervish ; "and Youssouf Bey is sacrificed ! Yet pause, lady, ere you reject a heart that lives in you—— or — answer me"—he pursued in a clear whisper, as again he gazed fixedly on the astonished girl : "tell me as you value your hope of paradise, do you remember Zadig the Shawl-merchant whom you once visited at the Khan of Damascus ? Deceive me not, for your fate is bound up in your reply—Ha ! it is so !——" And he averted his eyes as the fair girl covered her burning face with her hands, and burst into tears ; while a strange expression of wild delight flashed over his features.

"Who are you ?" gasped out the bewildered Maïtap : "You, who have dared to call up a vision before me which I have almost sacrificed my life to banish ? Speak !" she repeated passionately, as she half rose from the sofa, and prepared to recall her attendants.

"One moment, lady, and but one ;" urged the Dervish, as he grasped her arm ; "before

you call down ruin upon me. A less violent revenge is in your power, where you may yourself immolate the victim—the weapon of a hireling would be useless, absence will kill sooner than steel. I perilled my life to look on you once more, but I perilled it cheerfully; for—I am Zadig the Shawl-merchant——”

“Zadig!” echoed the maiden as she bent forward, and gazed with all her soul’s deep tenderness in her eyes upon the disguised Khawaji; “Zadig—do I not dream?”

“’Tis even I, sweet lady—then drive me not from your presence only to expire with anguish—have pity on my love, on my devotion—let me dedicate to you a life that would be worthless without the hope of your affection—tell me only that my boldness is forgiven. Let it not be deemed a crime that I have sought to save myself from wretchedness, when even force was used to compel me to a step against which my reason and my respect alike revolted.”

“Have you forgotten, Effendim;” asked the Pasha’s daughter, in as cold and stern a tone as her struggling affection would permit her to assume; “Have you forgotten that the step is a long one from the khan to the palace? Inshallah! I am no prize for the first pilgrim-mer-

chant who chances to deem himself a fitting match for the Satrap's only child."

"I am rebuked, lady;" said the young man sadly; "and I will intrude my memory no more upon you, I go only to die; and if I did not before expire beneath the lustre of your eyes, it was because I thought I read a light in them that bade me live. But in my blind presumption I have deceived myself; and the penalty of my folly shall be paid."

"Hold, madman!" almost shrieked the maiden, grasping his heavy cloak as he rose slowly from his knee; "I have much to ask of you, and something to thank you for. And first—how come you in this garb? And why did you disappear so suddenly from the city, only to return thus?"

"Most gracious lady;" murmured the deep rich voice; "the unhappy Zadig spread out his jewels before you, and left in your hands the portrait of the Pasha Sarim's son only a few months back; and he hoped in his infatuated passion, that even despite his grey beard and his bent figure you might have recognized him: but his presumption was keenly punished; he only drank in a deadlier poison by gazing on you for a moment, and encreased his despair

until he sank beneath it. What then remained to him? Nothing, save the khirkheh of a Dervish, and the hope of looking on you from a distance as you passed along the city streets—it was little for one who loved like Zadig, but it was all for which he cared to live—and, lady, I am here.”

“And you were then the Jewel-merchant—and you know all my weakness!” exclaimed the maiden with a fresh burst of tears; “but words are idle, Zadig—the Pasha may break his daughter’s heart, but he will never give her to a Khawaji.”

“Yet will I not complain, Light of the World!” whispered the young man, as he rose to his knee, and possessed himself of the hand of the bewildered girl; “even although I am not the Zadig whom your pure spirit had enshrined in its calm depths, and who has called forth those precious drops of tenderness. I am indeed he whom you visited at the Khan—he who dared to forward to you a toy which was intended to recal his memory—he who cheated you with a gray head and a faltering tongue into looking upon his likeness—he, in short, who kneels before you in the garb of holiness and self-denial—and whom you once rejected as unworthy of

your love—I am Youssouf, the son of Sarim Pasha.”

A faint shriek escaped the lips of the maiden, and she hastily drew the portrait from her bosom, and glanced from the ivory to her suitor, and from him back upon the picture; and as, despite his disguise, she indeed recognized its original in the kneeling figure beside her, she suffered the portrait to fall from her hand, which was instantly pressed to the lips and brow of the young Bey.

“It is enough;” he whispered; “and I am forgiven. The past is nothing, the present is your presence, the future is the hope of your affection. Light has again broke upon the soul of one whose spirit had long been dark. One word, houri of my heart’s paradise! but one, and I am your slave for ever!”

“Ne bilirim—what can I say?” murmured the fair Maïtap, as her head drooped upon the shoulder of her lover: “All shall be even as my lord wills. I am the gunech-tchichey,* and he is the sun—where he moves I follow—he is my life, and my light—my eyes and my soul are but his shadows.”

The Dervish shortly afterwards quitted the

* Sunflower.

harem of Talāt Pasha ; and with him fled all the gloom and tears of the gentle Maitap ; nor did many weeks elapse ere Youssouf Bey again appeared in the city as the suitor of the Satrap's daughter, and this time he did not sue in vain ; while none save he and his fair bride, (from whom I had the tale) ever dreamt that the presence of the pious Dervish in the garden-pavilion, had any share in influencing a marriage which spread joy and hilarity throughout two provinces.

PART III.

CHAPTER XVI.

“DEOVLETIN isliat — May you encrease in prosperity !” said the Pasha, as the Greek girl concluded her tale ; “ Your Maïtap is well worthy of attention ; though W’Allah ! it was unseemly in a Satrap’s daughter to bend her thoughts on a mere Khawaji.’”

“ Oh, say not so !” tenderly exclaimed the lovely slave : “ Who can controul the heart ? The ocean-waves are not bound even by bands of iron : the sands of the desert cannot be steadied when the simoom is abroad, even by the foundations of a city ; how then can the affections be controuled or guided ? The wild steed upon the mountain spurns the bit, and the free spirit brooks no controul.” And without

waiting a reply, she burst at once into a gush of song whose melody swept through the chamber.

Oh! the heart is a free and a fetterless thing,
A wave of the ocean! a bird on the wing!
A riderless steed o'er the desert-plain bounding,
A peal of the storm o'er the valley resounding;
It spurns at all bonds, and it mocks the decree
Of the world and its proud ones, and dares to be free!

Oh! the heart may be tamed by a smile or a tone
From the lip and the eye of a beautiful one;
But the frown and the force with its impulse contending,
Ever find it as adamant, cold and unbending;
It may break, it may burst, but its tyrants will see
That even in ruin it dares to be free!

“Nevertheless:” persisted the Pasha; “no woman has a right to say, ‘mail oldum,’* and to pine away without the permission of her father. With a man it is otherwise; he is the lord of himself, and is accountable to no one; but a woman’s beauty is her best dowry, and obedience her first duty.”

The fair Carimfil sighed, and the Greek girl smiled: one mourned the thrall of her own spirit, and the other scoffed at the idle self-sufficiency of the pampered Pasha.

“Shekier Allah!” continued the Satrap; “our women seldom think for themselves; and thus when they venture to do so, they become

* I have fallen in love.

the subject of a tale. But what is written, is written; and we will talk no more of this self-willed young houri. At sunset the almè will be here; and my friend the Tchorbadji tells me that they are as fair as the daughters of Peristan. You will love to look on them, janum — my soul;” he said, in a softer tone, turning towards the languid Carimfil, while he glanced at the dark eyed Katinka; “and I am assured that they have among them a massaldjhe who is a world’s wonder. Bakalum — we shall see — I doubt much whether she will excel our own sprightly Greek.”

“No, no;” said the beautiful Circassian; “there is no tongue which makes music like that of my beloved Katinka; she is the bulbul of the harem, the rose of the garden, the diamond of the mine—she is my eyes, and my life.”

“And I?” — asked the Satrap, with a slight tone of asperity.

“What shall I say?” answered Carimfil, as she bowed her fair head upon her bosom; “you are my lord, and my master. I think of you as the hadji thinks of the holy caba;* you are the Korān of my faith, but she is the poetry of my existence.”

* The Temple of Mecca.

“Chok tatilecin — you are very gracious ;” smiled Katinka ; “ I ask only to be the sister of your soul.” And she looked expressively at the Satrap’s bride, whose cheek and brow flushed with conscious crimson ; “ but these almè — I dread them ; they will rob me of your smiles ; and should they be indeed as fair as they are painted, perhaps of your love also.” And her glance wandered from the lady to the Satrap.

“ W’Allah ! there is little danger ;” said the Pasha, returning the gaze with interest. “ The almè ! what are they ? Ey vah ! — are they not bosh — nothing ; wandering from house to house, with light smiles and uncovered faces ? — Haivan der — they are animals ; and though they may be as fair as houris, they have eaten too much dirt to be remembered when they have received their backshish, and passed out of the harem.”

“ Alhemdullilah !” murmured Katinka, in a low tone, which reached only the ear for which it was intended, that of the sententious Satrap ; “ Let them come then, for the echoes of the harem have not of late been awakened by the sounds of mirth. I am often sad myself ;” and she passed her hand across her brow with a pretty affectation of languor, which well became

the expression of her noble features; "though perchance I should chide my own heart for its weakness."

"Hai, hai—true, true, you should be gay;" said the Pasha, nodding his head significantly: "you are surrounded by flowers, and fountains, and music, and you should be gay."

The Greek girl seized her zebec, and swept her hand across it, as though smitten by a sudden pang: the chords vibrated for an instant from the violence of the contact, and then trembled into silence, as the sweet voice of the musician fell softly and sadly upon the ears of her listeners.

Bright and blue is the summer sky;
And 'tis sweet 'neath the clustering boughs to lie,
And to watch the light vapours as they glance
Like fairy dreams o'er the pure expanse;
But oh! in those hours of calm delight,
When the world and its cares are forgotten quite,
That the charm may be a perfect one,
We must not watch alone!

Wild and stern is the tempest hour,
When the storm-god rides in his car of power,
When the winds make vocal the ocean caves,
And death rides throned on the crested waves;
And oh! if we would defy the shock
Of the billowy sea on the caverned rock;
And yield to our fate without a groan,
We must not die alone!

Calm is the sunset's golden spell,
 As it steeps in splendour each wood and fell,
 Flinging wreaths of gems over leaves and flowers,
 And painting the starry jasmine bowers ;
 But vainly its glory floods the sky,
 If only one turn an upraised eye
 To mark the bright vision ere 'tis flown ;—
 For life's loveliest things
 Droop their fainting wings,
 When we look on them alone !

The song of Katinka saddened the Pasha's wife ; but the Pasha himself, for whom it was especially intended, was quite unconscious of its sentiment ; and merely remarking that the air was dull and monotonous, and that sometimes solitude was preferable to society, he intimated his intention to return to the salemlik,* to make his evening meal, and to enjoy his evening slumber before the arrival of the almè ; a resolution which he shortly afterwards carried into effect, to the great satisfaction of the fair inmates of the harem.

* Men's apartments.

CHAPTER XVII.

AT the set of sun Nevrestè and her fair band stood on the threshold of the Pasha's palace. Maniolopolo and the graceful Mherpirwir walked side by side, and both were absorbed in thought. The dancing-girl neither wept nor sighed, though she knew that the roof beneath which she stood covered the idol of a heart that she would have died to secure ; but she gazed despairingly on the young Greek through her veil, as though in that long look she would have concentrated her whole existence. The emotion of Maniolopolo was of a more mixed and less devoted character ; his pulses bounded indeed, as he remembered that he should ere long behold his gentle Carimfil : the first dream of his manhood,

the brightest vision of his spirit ; but blent with love for her, came fears for his own safety—fears which made his lip quiver, and his brain burn.

It was perhaps fortunate for him that his reflections tended to subdue his passionate impatience ; for the Aga Baba, who detested every incursion on his master's harem as piously as any jealous Moslem could desire, turned a searching, and by no means loving eye, upon each of the almè as they passed him ; and assuredly the uncertain and timid step of the young Greek subjected him to no suspicion.

A tedious hour was passed by the band in an anti-room, through which the negroes of the household came and went on their different missions ; while a few idlers grouped themselves about the strangers, admiring their dresses, and asking a thousand questions, which were answered by Nevrestè with a tact that would not have disgraced a diplomatist.

But at length the expected summons arrived, and the dancing-girls were conducted through a long gallery to the inner door of the harem ; where, prostrating themselves to the earth, they awaited the order of the lady to advance into the apartment. They were a lovely groupe ; with their flowing veils, long tresses, and picturesque

costumes ; their white arms gleaming like sea-foam, and their dark eyes flashing out like meteors ; and for the first moment the Pasha's wife was silent with admiration ; but the transitory surprise once over she received them gently and graciously, and bade them approach without fear.

As Nevrestè led them on in obedience to the command of the fair Circassian, Maniolopolo ventured for the first time to glance in the direction of the sweet and well-known voice. Carimfil Hanoum was seated on the edge of a gorgeous sofa, glittering with gold fringe, and gay with embroidery ; and at her feet reclined his beautiful sister pillowed upon a pile of cushions. The Pasha was enthroned on the gorgeous divan ; his chibouque between his lips, his jewelled hand loosely grasping its slender tube, and his half-closed eyes giving assurance of the tranquillity or apathy of his spirit. Behind him stood two negroes, richly clad, with turbans and girdles of cachemire of the richest dyes ; while the female slaves of the harem were clustered together at the extremity of the apartment, which was brightly lighted up by a number of tapers, arranged on small tables of inlaid wood in different parts of the saloon.

The centre of the floor was vacant ; and there the dancing-girls at once took their stand, and grouped themselves in the most graceful and picturesque attitudes. Three of the number knelt upon the carpet with their six-stringed zebecs on their knees ; the remainder stood around them, some with their chapletted heads flung back, and their white arms raised high in air, while the silver bells of their tambourines rang out like fairy-chimes : others bending lightly forward, with one foot barely touching the floor, in the attitude of listening, like the nymphs of Diana on the doubtful track of some light-hoofed fawn : and others again, languidly supporting each other in a sweet repose, such as the houris enjoy in the rose-blooming bowers of Paradise.

“ Mashallah !” murmured the Pasha beneath his breath : “ ’tis a vision of Corkam !* They are like the stars of a summer night, the one lovelier than the other ; and, all together, enough to light up a world. Alhemdullilah ! Mahomet was a great prophet !”

This reverie was interrupted by the sudden pealing out of the voices and instruments of the

* Paradise.

dancing-girls, as a dozen of the band, led by the beautiful Mherpirwir, commenced their intricate and graceful evolutions. The dance told a tale of love ; there was the swift pursuit, the reluctant flight, the earnest supplication, the timid dissent, the impassioned eagerness, the yielding affection ; and as the last twirl of the tambourines made the air vocal, all the band were kneeling at the feet of their high priestess, the gentle Mherpirwir, holding towards her the lotus-wreaths with which they had been crowned.

“ Aferin, aferin—well done, well done !” exclaimed the Satrap, startled out of his apathy by the enchanting spectacle : “ Abdool, fill them each a feljane * of sherbet ; for, by the soul of my father ! they are peris—I have said it.”

The negro obeyed ; and as each fair girl bent her head to the Satrap, and touched the chrystal goblet with her lips, the eyes of Maniolopolo and his sister met in a long gaze which revealed their secret. For a moment Katinka trembled, but her’s was not a soul to shake at shadows ; and she recovered herself before the flush had faded from her brow, sufficiently to remark that her brother looked gloriously handsome in his disguise, and that the attention of the unus-

* Cup.

pecting and less observant Carimfil might be safely drawn to him without a risk of his discovery; a circumstance which would enable her to arouse in their subsequent conversations a thousand tender memories that would blend most happily with the vision of the dark-browed awali of the almè.

Her resolution formed, she looked up towards her beautiful friend, who bent over her to catch the words which she felt were hovering on her lips, and softly whispered: "Look at the girl in the centre of the group — she with the willow waist, and gazelle eyes—by the instrument in her hand she must be an awali — saw you ever such a face? The rest of the band are as faded lilies beside her!"

The Pasha's wife glanced towards the disguised Sèidika as she had been desired; and by a strange coincidence, at that very moment, so did the Pasha also. The wife looked long and earnestly, for there was an expression in the dark wild eyes of the singing-girl which strangely moved her, though she could not account for the emotion that they excited: and the husband did so likewise, from a feeling of admiration as intense as it was involuntary.

Maniolopolo was attired in a robe of deep

crimson, over which floated a light veil of the most delicate azure ; clusters of sweet-scented flowers, among which the tube-rose and the hyacinth were conspicuous, hung loosely in his hair, and rested upon his cheeks. His ample schalvar, (or trowsers) of tissuc, concealed his feet ; and on his knees he supported the gaily-inlaid instrument with which he was accustomed to accompany his ballads. Beside him lay a tambourine, and in his girdle he carried a tusbee of orange-wood, and an embroidered handkerchief.

The difficulty of his position rendered him cautious ; and thus his bent head and downcast eyes were as gentle and feminine as his costume.

The Pasha was by no means an amateur of music, and he had lately learnt to love it only from the lips of Katinka ; he listened, therefore, rather from courtesy than inclination to the love-ditty, which, at the bidding of Nevrestè, the disguised Sèïdika murmured out in a low and tender tone, that called tears to the eyes of the women ; and when the song ceased, it was matter of indifference to the fair Carimfil how the exhibition proceeded, for her spirit was in tumult, and she knew that her lover was before her.

As he first prepared to obey his task-mistress, Maniolopolo, bending low over his zebec, trifled for a moment among its strings ; and softly commenced :—

“ I’ve heard of isles beyond the sea,
Where summer neither fails nor fades —”

then suddenly shaking his head mournfully, like one who dares not recall a long-forgotten strain, he struck at once into a Persian love-song which diverted the attention of his listeners, and enabled the trembling Circassian to recover her self-possession.

“ Pek ahi, Pek ahi—very well, very well,” said Saïfula Pasha, as the song ceased ; “ It is not bad ; but we have a bulbul in our own harem, who has a sweeter note. Take the zebec, Bèyaz ;” he added, glancing down upon the Greek girl ; “ and we will show this pensive awali the music of our distant province.”

Katinka took up her instrument with affected reluctance ; and measured the dancing-girls with her proud eye, as if to imply that she felt degraded by being compelled to exhibit her talent by their company ; and then, meekly bowing her obedience to the Satrap, she turned

a long look upon her adventurous brother, and commenced her song.

Where is my loved one? Oh, whisper me where—
At the end of the earth? I will seek for her there—
Is she throned on a gem in some jewel-lit cave?
Does she ride on the foam of some snow-crested wave—
Does she float like a cloud through the regions of air?
My soul and my spirit will follow her there!

Oh! the globe is too narrow to hide what we love—
And the billow below, and the vapour above;
For the heart is a guide that ne'er faints on the way,
That cares not to slumber, and asks not to stay—
Let the worshipped one dwell in earth, ocean, or air;
The spirit that loves her, will follow her there!

“Chok chay,” smiled the Pasha, as the fair slave boldly looked towards him for applause: “that is much — and well enough to sing to a zebec in an hour of idleness; but *Alhemdullilah!* it is mere poetry and madness. Now, tell me, mother:” he continued addressing Nevrestè: “have you not a *Massaldji* in your troop? The *Tchorbadji Effendi* talked to me of a maiden whose subtle tongue could enchain the ear of attention, and charm the mind into forgetfulness. Let her speak—but, *Bashustun!* I will have no more mawkish sentiment — let there be some kief* in the tale, or it will set me to sleep.”

* Cheerfulness.

“Wallah billah, your highness shall be obeyed ;” said the old woman ; “ Speak, Sèïdika—my lord listens.”

“ Shall I talk to the noble Satrap of love, when he cares not to hear it named ?” said Maniolopolo gravely ; “ Asteferallah—heaven forbid ! It is a threadbare subject which may well be cast away like a tattered garment ; every one has worn it once, but it seldom sits comfortably ; and thus it gets flung from one to the other until it is known to all, and little cared for by any — some think, indeed, that they wear it, when they have folded themselves in a tunic of quite another fashion ; but as they seldom discover the cheat which they have put upon their own shoulders, they walk the bazārs as erect in their motley, as though it were true cloth of gold. I will, however, since my lord sees fit, at once change the subject ; and relate to him the Adventures of the Barber of Bassora.”

“ Inshallah ! at last we shall hear something worth listening to ;” said the Satrap : “ I like the title of the tale vastly : it smacks of everyday life ; tchapouk, tchapouk, quick, quick — let the calam of memory move rapidly, and you shall have no reason to regret your visit to the harem of Saïfula Pasha.”

“Heaven fulfil the promise of your Highness !” said Maniolopolo significantly ; and, amid the most perfect stillness, with the beautiful and agitated Carimfil immediately before him, and the sad and gentle Mherpirwir at his side, he thus began his narration.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF
BASSORA.

IN the famous city of Bassora, about a hundred years ago, lived a worthy khamal,* named Husref, who was remarkable, first for his immense strength of muscle, which enabled him to carry upon his back the loads of two men ; and some, indeed, went so far as to say, the lading of an ass ; and for the fact of never having become the father of a child which had not some natural defect.

There was Medjid the one-eyed ; Riffat the one-sided ; Chiamil the three-fingered ; Mezvir the bow-legged ; Elfi the hare-lipped ; and Moctaleb the left-handed. These were his sons ; and though his wife Minè,† who was the

* Street-porter.

† Enamel.

only child of a sign-painter, had been one of the prettiest girls in the somewhat obscure street in which she resided, he was not one whit more fortunate with his daughters. Djamilè was hump-backed, Hafizè was red-haired, Libabè was celebrated for a limp, and Zeinip was stone deaf. In short, it could not be denied that they were a remarkable family.

With ten children, and about as many paras a day, a man cannot be considered to be perfectly independant ; and poor Husref accordingly sometimes ate his olives without bread, and generally his bread without caviare ; but, somehow or other, all the children contrived to live on, being occasionally permitted to plunge their hands into the pillauf of a neighbour, when they never failed to avail themselves freely of the privilege. Minè grumbled a good deal, it is true ; and seldom failed to remind her husband when he returned home after his day's labour, that, had she married the oda-bashi* of the Pasha's guard, who was killed in an encounter with a predatory tribe of Arabs, and whose widow had been pensioned by the Satrap, instead of a beggarly khamal, who dared not wag his beard before the meanest functionary of the city, she

* Corporal.

should have been as great a person as Habitoulah, the wife of Marsouk the melon-merchant, whose feridjhe* had been twice new-lined since her marriage ; while her own was dropping into such holes that she should not long be able to walk the bazār for very shame. She had many other little complaints also, as unpleasant as they were useless, with which she diurnally regaled his ears ; but the philosophic Husref heeded them not ; the heart of Minè was relieved by these outpourings of her discontent ; and her voice generally set the weary khamal to sleep, despite the noise of the ten children, who were all as spoilt, as happy, as dirty, and as ragged, as any domestic colony in that remote quarter of the city.

Thus the family of Husref the khamal, might altogether be said to prosper ; for when people continue for years to scold, to sleep, and to treat fortune like the sorry jade that she is, they cannot be considered as quite wretched ; and, in this way, constantly scrambling up the sandhill of life, sometimes buried up to his neck, and sometimes obtaining a momentary footing, the husband of Minè the regretful, continued to toil, and bear, and forbear, until his ten chil-

* Woman's cloak.

dren began to grow into men and women about him.

Matters now became serious. What was to be done with them? Husref uttered many an “Inshallah!” but faith alone would not supply them with employment; and the deep respirations of the anxious khamal, as he bent under his load, were now frequently lengthened into sighs.

About this time a Sherbetjhe, whose mother was the friend and gossip of Minè, demanded his daughter Hafizè in marriage, and he gave her as freely as he would have given a draught of water to a thirsty hadji. Good fortune is better than gold; and a week or two after the marriage of the red-haired maiden, a Serudjhe of the neighbourhood offered to engage his son Mezvir in his stables, when the bow-legged youth at once found himself provided with food, labour, and a good bed of dhourra-leaves.* Riffat the one-sided, established himself as the keeper of a khan in the neighbourhood of his father’s house, by doing all the duty of a bent and crippled old man, who looked as though he were coeval with its walls, until the day of his death, when he bequeathed his keys, his wardrobe, his besom, his

* Indian corn.

flagged shed, and his ten paras a day, to the young volunteer; who at once declared himself independent, and commenced pilfering the travellers who frequented the caravanserai, and cleaning the court, on his own account.

All this was truly gratifying to the paternal pride of the khamal; and he congratulated himself in the contentment of his heart, that his sons were in a fair way to rise in the world, and to become men of mark. In the exuberance of his satisfaction he frequently forgot that there were still eight of his progeny at home; but the fact was soon forced upon his memory as he passed his narrow portal, and bent his head that he might not strike it against the door-sil, by the upbraidings of his wife, and the uproar and tumult of his growing family.

Things were in this state when one day, as Husref was leaning against the trunk of an acacia tree which overshadowed the wooden terrace of a coffee-shop near the meat-market, enjoying the fumes of a luxury which he did not at that moment possess a para to procure; a stranger descended from a jaded mule, not twenty paces from him, and throwing the bridle to a serudjhe who attended him, bade him take back the beast, and await him at the house of the person

he had named on their arrival in the city ; while at the same time, he beckoned to Husref to relieve the man of a moderately sized cypress-wood box, which rested on the neck of his own beast.

The khamal obeyed with alacrity ; and having possessed himself of the chest, carefully deposited it on the ground to await the further commands of his new employer.

“ Wallah ! you have a strong arm, Khamal ;” said the stranger, whom, from his garb, Husref supposed to be a Persian ; “ You are the very man I want. Here are ten piastres ;” and as he spoke he placed them in the hand of the astonished porter, who had not been master of such a sum for years ; “ Bid the cafeje here give you a cup of coffee, that your heart may be as light as your arm is steady ; and then away with you to the southern side of the Great Mosque, and there await me, taking care not to lose sight of the box.”

The delighted khamal lost not a moment in obeying this command. He swallowed the coffee, saluted the stranger with a fervent “ Allah es marladek —” shouldered the chest, and started off at a light trot for the Great Mosque of the city.

“ Ten piastres for traversing a stadia length of the street ;” he murmured joyously as he moved along ; “ and with a mere feather-weight on my shoulder ; why I must surely have fallen in with Kāroon himself ! Y’Allah ! my felech is bright to-day. What shall I say to Minè ? If I tell her that I have earned ten piastres, they will melt like snow before the sun, for she will fancy herself a Khamal-bashi’s wife ; No, no—I will say two — and with two piastres we shall sup well.”

Having made this prudent resolution, the contented Husref jogged along, communing with his own thoughts, until he reached the principal mosque ; when taking up the position which had been indicated to him by the stranger, he placed the chest on the ground, and squatting himself beside it, removed his turban from his head, and concealed among its ragged folds the eight piastres which were to be the commencement of a hoard, amassed from the produce of as many such profitable adventures as the present, as it might please Allah to provide for him.

An hour passed away ; an hour of luxury to the toil-worn Husref, who had never once changed his position save to pick up a coin which was flung to him by a Frank traveller,

who seeing him seated there, covered with rags, and deep in thought, threw him a piece of money as a matter of course, and passed on.

“ The Infidel dog is subjected by my felech:” * murmured Husref, as he possessed himself of the coin ; “ This is to be a white day. And what shall I do with this piastre? shall I tell Minè that I bring her three? or shall I conceal this also in my turban? or shall I——” and he glanced across the narrow street ; “ shall I fill my bag with gebeli, and smoke a comfortable pipe or two of the strong-savoured Latakia? Chok chay—that is much : it shall be so.” And having first glanced in every direction to ascertain that no person was passing to carry off his trust, he shuffled along at his best speed to a shop in the neighbourhood, where he purchased a modest quantity of the coveted luxury, and then returned and re established himself beside the chest.

* Constellation.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF BAS-
SORA—*continued.*

THE chibouque was soon lighted ; and as the heavy fumes of the strong and coarse tobacco curled over his beard, the happy Husref, with a joyous feeling of secret prosperity, began to muse on his family affairs.

“ Two sons and a daughter respectably established—eight piastres among the folds of my turban, with fifteen paras of change from the gebeli in my girdle — Shekiur Allah ! Husref the khamal will yet rise in the world. But my dear son Moctaleb— my favourite son, —By the beard of the Prophet ! his fortune is as left-handed as himself, or his fine eyes would ere this have filled his girdle with jeb-khargi*—

* Pocket-money.

Something must be done for Moctaleb; he desires to be a barber, and nothing could be better; but the shop, the soap, the razors, the towels, and the basins, must be paid for; and where is the money?"

This was an uncomfortable question, for it was one to which the anxious father could not satisfactorily reply, and he therefore did the best thing which could be done under such circumstances; he determined to leave the matter to Providence, and to think of something else.

The next subject of contemplation that he selected could not have been a very entertaining one, for he was just dropping off to sleep, when an acquaintance who chanced to be passing with a large basin in his hand, roused him once more into consciousness by offering to share with him a copious draught of boza* which had just been given to him in payment of some service that he had rendered to a *cafèjhe*.

The *khamal* did not hesitate to accept the offer: and his friend, having first secured his own share, handed the basin to Husref, who emptied it at a draught; and the man having passed on, he resumed his reverie, which, blending with the intoxicating fumes of the boza, soon

* A strong beverage, composed of raki, pimento, and mint.

completely overpowered him. His head sank on the chest, his limbs became relaxed, his breathing heavy, and in five seconds he was dead asleep.

How long he had been in the land of dreams he knew not, when he was suddenly aroused by the fearful cry of “Yan guen var!”* and the harsh stroke of the iron-tipped staff of the fire-guard on the rude pavement of the street. He instinctively started from the earth, and rubbed his eyes as he perceived that he was surrounded by a pitchy darkness, through which he glanced about him to discover the direction of the fire; a fact which he had no sooner ascertained, than in the confusion of the moment, totally forgetting the chest, and almost his own identity, he rushed forward to the scene of ruin, and was soon busily employed in rendering assistance to the sufferers.

When, after the lapse of an hour, he remembered the box, and hurriedly returned to the spot where he had left it, it was too late — the chest was gone !

Husref dashed his turban upon the earth, and almost yelled in the agony of his spirit. How should he face his employer? he, who had be-

* There is a fire.

trayed his trust. How should he take his stand on the accustomed spot? He who was no longer worthy of confidence—who had blackened his own face through his intemperate folly—and scattered dirt in his beard?

While he thus bitterly reproached himself, he heard a step rapidly approaching; he looked despairingly in the direction whence it sounded, and beheld the stranger within half a dozen paces of him, in the gray light of the dawn.

“Haidè — come along, khamal;” said the well-remembered voice; “I have made you keep a long vigil, but it shall not be an unprofitable one. But what is this!” he exclaimed, hurriedly glancing round: “Where is the chest?”

The affrighted Husref sank upon his knees, and with quivering lips related the whole history of his misfortune. The stranger listened anxiously, and at the conclusion of the story, he broke into a low and bitter laugh, as he murmured beneath his breath; “Ajaib!—the krsz* is welcome to his prize — he knew not his own errand, and has saved us some labour. Korkma,—fear not, my friend; you are forgiven; but look well to yourself in future, and when

* Thief.

you have a treasure in charge, beware of boza. Will you promise me this?"

"Bashustun — on my head be it!" said Husref emphatically: "I am the slave of my lord for ever. I am less than a dog before him — and here;" and as he spoke, he took off his ragged turban whence he drew the hidden piastres, to which he added those which he carried in his no less ragged girdle; "here are the wages that I have forfeited by my mad folly. The value of the chest I cannot replace for I am poor, miserably poor, and I have a wife and eight children under my squalid roof who look to me for bread; while I possess but fifteen paras in the world. Have mercy on me, Effen-dim, for those fifteen paras are my all."

"Put up your money;" said the stranger, turning aside his hand; "Do you take me for as great a brigand as the pezevenk who has run off with our chest of cypress-wood? But your eight children—we must talk of this — I will accompany you to your house——"

"House!" echoed the dismayed khamal; "it is a hovel — my lord cannot pass under such a roof."

"Gel, gel — come, come; no more of this;" smiled the stranger; "I have taken a liking to

you, in spite of the strong boza, and the stolen box. I must see these eight children; and I have already fasted many hours—here is gold—let your wife prepare for me a pillauf of chicken well spiced, and purchase a rug for me to lie down upon, and a prayer-carpet to enable me to perform my devotions, until I establish myself elsewhere. I wish to avoid the public khans.”

“My lord’s will is mine;” said Husref, bewildered by the extraordinary nature of the proposal, and the contemplation of a chicken-pillauf prepared at his own mangal;* “but I have a son, a youth of discretion and honesty, who is keeper of a khan not fifty paces from my poor dwelling, who would lay his forehead in the dust before the saviour of his father; and it is so long a time since Minè has tried her skill in the cooking of a chicken——”

“That this morning she will prepare two for us, that the task may be more easy;” interrupted the stranger; “and now, let us away at once, for the sun is rising above the city walls, and we have both passed a busy night.”

And so saying he gathered his cloak about him, and turned in the direction indicated by the astonished Husref.

* A brazier containing heated charcoal.

CHAPTER XX.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF BAS-
SORA—*continued.*

THE Khamal and his companion proceeded slowly along the narrow and gloomy streets of the city until they reached the quarter in which stood the squalid habitation of the bewildered Husref. As they made their way, the stranger asked a thousand questions relating to the family of the porter, the number of his children married and unmarried, the age and temper of his wife, and the personal appearance of his daughters; and he could not conceal his amusement when the confiding Husref, warmed into good fellowship by the condescension of his stately employer, imparted to him the singular ill luck which had attended all his progeny, and

the seal that had been set upon each at its birth.

“Mashallah ! 'tis like an Arab tale ;” smiled the stranger ; “ they brought a name into the world with them, and you might have saved yourself the trouble of giving them a second. However, something must be done, and I at once adopt Moctaleb as my own child ; for he has the same defect as myself, and as I have never found that it affected my fortunes, neither ought it to mar those of your favourite son.”

“Allah buyûk der !” apostrophised the delighted khamal ; “ what am I that my lord should repay my transgression of the past night by a benefit of which I am too blind to see the limit ?—But, yavash, Effendimou — here is a kibaub-shop, where I shall do well to turn a portion of your gold into food. I will make my bargain, and be with you in a moment ; but I must go alone, or the bash pezevenk* will make me pay with my eyes for all his dainties.”

The stranger nodded acquiescence ; and the happy Husref, assuming a consequential air, consequent on the contact of the coin which he held closely pressed against his horny palm, stept gravely across the swoln and unsavoury

* Great rogue.

kennel that intersected the street, to the tempting counter of the kibaub-merchant.

Here he gazed for awhile in luxurious indecision, coveting every thing, and purchasing nothing, until he was aroused by the remonstrance of the dealer, who demanded angrily why he did not pursue his path, instead of gloating over his edibles, and, perhaps, for aught he knew to the contrary, infecting his food by the influence of the Evil Eye at the very opening of the shutters.

“ Ne istersinez — what do you want ? ” answered the khamal impatiently ; “ I come here as a customer — Give me a basin of tchorba,* a dish of dolmas,† a lump of keftas,‡ half a dozen quails for the pillauf, as many kibaub skewers, half an okè of tchalva,§ a dozen fe-tyrs,|| and a chicken.”

“ Ajaib ust — it is wonderful ! ” said the merchant, stroking down his well-trimmed and bushy beard ; “ a khamal boldly orders the repast of a Pasha ; but the piastres—where are they ? ”

The customer replied by slowly opening his fingers, and displaying the piece of gold.

“ Chok chay—that is much ; ” said the kibaub-

* Soup.

† Balls made of rice and chopped meat.

‡ Force meat.

§ A composition of flour, honey, and oil.

|| Thin cakes eaten warm, with honey or sugar.

merchant; "now, we will to business." And without further delay he began to pack the required dainties into a small basket.

When the articles were safely arranged, the bargaining commenced, and the asseverations of the dealer, who swore lustily by his beard that he was almost giving away his property, had not the slightest effect upon the khamal; who, when he found that the kibaub-merchant was determined to hold out until the last moment, gravely remarked that there were other shops in the city whose owners had the fear of the Prophet before their eyes, and turned towards the door. His departure was, however, by no means to be permitted; and, accordingly, after a little more wrangling, the gold coin of the stranger was changed, the basket shouldered by the khamal, and himself sturdily on his way to rejoin his employer.

In a short time after the purchase was made, Husref stopped at the threshold of his dwelling. It was the remnant of what had once been a substantial and spacious house, but time and fire had left it little more than a tottering and blackened wreck. Portions of wall, of a thickness which might apparently have defied destruction, were still visible; but the principle part

of the structure had been composed of wood, and all that now remained, save the rude and solid blocks of masonry already alluded to, were irregularly shaped and smoky-looking spaces, cumbered with rubbish and creeping plants, and grim with ruin. Nched among these uninviting relics of bygone comfort, and leaning against one of the remaining fragments of wall, rose the wooden tenement of Husref the khamal, like the abode of the presiding genius of destruction; and through the ill-hung door of this squalid dwelling did he lead the stranger; who, however he might have prepared himself for the sight of poverty and discomfort, found that the reality far outran his anticipations.

The hovel consisted of one immense roughly-paved apartment, a portion being screened off for the harem by a time-worn curtain of baize, attached to the ceiling and walls by huge skewers of tough wood. Not an effort at ornament or even comfort was visible; all was bleak, cheerless, uncompromising poverty. The wretched divan which occupied one side of the outer apartment was covered with blue and white checked cotton, patched with pieces of stuff of all colours and qualities; and the only object that relieved the eye was the branch of a wild fig-tree which had

rooted itself among the rubbish of the ruin, and now flaunted its rich large leaves through the rude unglazed opening that served as a window, and could only be secured from the weather by a wooden shutter.

But, as the stranger stepped across the threshold, he saw nothing of all this, for his gaze was riveted on a groupe in the centre of the floor. Kneeling upon the stones, her head bent over a chest, and her face uncovered, he beheld the wife of the khamal, while beside her stood three youths, one of whom was tall and handsome; and close behind her a younger female, who had a tattered shawl flung about her head.

A word from Husref, as he followed close behind his employer, sent the women shrieking behind the screen; and revealed fully to the stranger a fact which he had already suspected — It was indeed his own lost chest which stood in the centre of the khamal's floor.

As for the astonished Husref, he darted forward, and flung himself upon the box in an extacy of delight — called it his eyes, and his soul — and committed a thousand extravagancies, which, in so grave a man, were like the gambols of a donkey; while the three youths looked on in astonishment, and glanced from

their excited father to his silent companion in undisguised amaze.

“Na to ne, na to ne—there it is, there it is!” at length exclaimed the happy Husref: “the very chest which my lord gave into my keeping! Allah buyûk der — He is great; and my face is whitened. Wallah billah! I may once more lift up my head in the bazâr, for my felech has washed away my shame—Speak, Effendimou—my master, is not this indeed the stolen box.”

“It is, indeed;” said the stranger with a bitter laugh; “and all that it contains is my property.”

A faint shriek was heard from behind the screen, followed by an angry whisper; and the stranger started and turned suddenly towards the tallest of the youths, as he demanded sternly: “Has the lid of that chest been lifted? And how came it here?”

“Let not my lord nurse displeasure against his slave;” answered the young man deprecatingly; “My father left his home yesterday at dawn to ply his trade in the city, and for many hours we heeded not an absence which was frequently of long occurrence; but when the night fell, our mother became restless and unhappy.—Some evil had perchance overtaken her husband

—we all fasted, for we had no provision in the house ; and as the darkness became more dense, and our alarm increased, I set off to search for my father in the city streets. For hours I wandered hither and thither, having no clue to direct my steps ; the night advanced ; and there were few persons stirring save the guard, who, as they patrolled the town, frequently obliged me to crouch down to avoid them, lest they should make me prisoner ; and it was when thus endeavouring to escape their notice in the neighbourhood of the Great Mosque, that, as I skulked into a corner, I struck my head against a hard substance, which I at once discovered to be a chest. Astonished at such a circumstance ;—for, as the soldiers passed on, I ascertained that no living soul was in the street ; I at once understood that this must be an immediate interposition of my felech ; and I resolved to possess myself of the box until the return of my father, who would be able to decide on the steps necessary to be taken with my prize. Having come to this decision, I slowly left the Mosque, and with the chest on my shoulder, turned in the direction of our abode ; but the reappearance of the city-guard compelled me to diverge from the direct path, and to take one much more cir-

cuitous ; for I well knew that whatever might be the contents of the box, my appearance, and the incoherent account which I should give, both of it and myself, could not fail to create suspicion which might entail upon me danger, if not absolute destruction. While I was thus engaged, a cry of ‘ Fire ! ’ came on the wind, and I hastily looked about for a secure hiding-place for my treasure, that I might hurry to the assistance of the unfortunates whom Allah had visited in his wrath.

“ I readily found one ; for, not a hundred paces from the spot where I stood, I remembered to have often remarked a small enclosure containing a tomb which must have been that of some one of note ; for the iron grating that enclosed it had been richly wrought and gilt, and there were traces of the chisel on the solid masonry of the monument. But its glory had long been gone by : the iron balustrade had rusted and given way ; and a rank crop of nettles grew about the stone-work of the tomb. Among these weeds I concealed the chest, and then echoing the thrilling cry of ‘ Yan guen var ! ’ I sprang forward in the direction of the flames, which were already draping the solemn heavens with crimson, and putting out the stars.

“ For awhile I forgot the chest ; for as the burning rafters gave way, and in their fall, flung showers of golden stars against the sky, I heard a faint cry of anguish ; it was the voice of a woman ; and I remember only that in the next moment I was surrounded by fire, bright, scorching fire, which seemed to dry the marrow in my bones ; and that I was busy tearing from the head and face of a young female a blazing veil of muslin which she clutched with convulsive power—Then I was once more in the free air, with the wind of heaven playing upon my brow ; and the young beauty whom I had saved was in the arms of an aged Emir, who was covering her with the shawl from his own waist, and calling upon her by every tender name that parental fondness ever lavished upon the object of its idolatry, to look up and tell her anxious father that she lived. But the faded lily spoke not—and at length—”

“ You remembered the chest, and returned to seek it — was it not so, my son ? ” asked the khamal.

“ I did : ” replied Moctaleb ; “ and the dawn was breaking as I reached the burial-place, and once more took possession of my prize. I now dreaded no encounter, and walked boldly for-

ward with my burthen, until I reached the threshold of my home ; when endeavouring to rest the chest against a block of masonry while I pushed back the door, it slipped from my hold, and burst open with the fall."

" And you saw the contents ?" asked the stranger.

" Even so:" replied the youth ; " and having done so, I determined at once to carry the box to some obscure spot, and there leave it to be found by any passer-by ; but as I prepared to do so, I recognised the cord that was about it to be that of my father ; and I instantly changed my resolution, and having closed the lid, I brought the mysterious chest into the house."

" Mysterious indeed !" murmured the stranger as if unconsciously ; but instantly recovering himself, he said blandly : " Enough of this for to-day, good youth ; we are all weary : let us eat, and drink, and then endeavour to sleep. Close the door, and shut out the growing light ; lend me a beenish to wrap about me, or a rug to lie down upon, when we have finished our repast ; and as I have brought terror under your roof by the contents of that unlucky box, I will to-night make you acquainted with their history. We all require rest ; and while I am your guest, you

shall have a respite from labour. So now, khamal, to our repast."

After some delay the meal was served; but first the three-fingered Chiamil had to seek coals to heat the mangal, and the one-sided Riffat butter to stew the pillauf; while the hump-backed Djamilè, with a shred of well-mended muslin folded about her face, spread the tray, and filled the delf cups with water. Minè was all activity; she hurried the exertions of the limping Libabè; restrained the volubility of the hump-backed Djamilè; and shook her clenched hand at the mischievous Zeïnip, whose deafness rendered her inaccessible to wordy menace.

Thanks to these feminine exertions, all was at length ready; and the stranger having insisted that Husref and his sons should share his meal, they were soon squatted round the tray, feasting heartily upon such fare as they had never before tasted save in their dreams: while the women, carefully veiled, waited on them most assiduously, and dexterously changed the dishes in time to secure for themselves a sufficient portion of their contents.

The meal over, Husref and his guest lighted their chibouques, and established themselves on the hard, straw-stuffed divan; while the young

men retired to the lower end of the apartment, to converse in whispers on the extraordinary events of the night; and the women huddled together behind the screen rapidly demolished the reliques of the feast.

In another hour all slept under the roof of the khamal; and the muezzin had proclaimed the mid-day prayer from the minaret of every mosque in the city ere the weary family were again astir. Another hearty meal commenced the business of the day; and although to avoid the observation of the neighbours, Husref and his sons bent their way to the bazār and mingled with the crowd, they only purchased provisions, and returned home as evening set in, to listen to the promised narrative of the stranger.

The appointed hour arrived; and the owner of the chest having directed Moctaleb to lift it into the centre of the floor, seated himself upon a beenish beside it; and leaning his elbow upon the lid, as the khamal and his family squatted themselves beside him, he calmly desired the young man to explain the nature of its contents.

Moctaleb turned pale, and involuntarily glanced towards his father.

“ You are an ass, and the father of asses !” said Husref impatiently; “ there can be neither

an afrit nor a ghoul shut into the chest — Why then do you not speak ?”

“ It contains ;” replied the young man in a low voice ; “ a human eye, a human ear, a foot, a heart, a hand, and a dagger——”

“ True, as though the Ibn Sallah* himself had counted them ;” said the imperturbable stranger : and then regardless of the horror which was depicted on every countenance around him, he slowly laid his spread palm on the lid of the chest, and began his story.

* Son of prayer.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ADVENTURES OF THE BARBER OF
BASSORA—*continued.*

“ My name is Hussein, and I was born in this good city of Bassora just four and forty years ago, during the feast of the Baïram, amid festivities and rejoicings which were considered to be of good omen both to mother and child. How far they fulfilled the prophecy will appear hereafter.

“ My father had been an Emir Hadj,* a man of good repute, and tolerable fortune; who had more than once conducted a caravan of Franks across the Desart, and been generously paid by the Infidels for his guidance and protection. Some evil tongues had indeed insinuated more than once that, in the occasional and apparently

* A conductor of pilgrims.

not altogether accidental encounters of his caravans with the predatory Arabs, traces of a good understanding might be discerned between him and his enemies, which considerably militated against his integrity, while they increased the contents of his jeppa;* but the world is so censorious that it is only prudent to shut the ears of conviction against the voice of reproach.

“ My mother Gumush† was the daughter of a lapidary who had more science than piastres, and whose fortune was to the full as hard as the gems he fashioned. I never knew her save as a widow ; for my father expired of plague in the Desart before I was a year old ; caught as we were told, by his having rifled the pockets of a dying hadji who had joined the caravan about an hour before, with the poison in his veins. My eldest brother took charge of the caravan, and conducted it safely to its destination ; but we suddenly lost sight of him, and it was not until many years afterwards, when my mother was no more, and I was established in my native city, that we again heard of him as an eminent Emir Hadj, trading to and from Bagdad.

“ As for me, my mother having married again, and her husband, a handsome young

* Pocket.

† Silver.

sekeljhi,* being to the full as enamoured of her piastres as of her person, and finding me determined against following his surfeiting trade under his very unpromising auspices, provision was soon made for me in the shop of an Armenian barber, whose skill in bleeding and shaving was notorious through the whole city.

“ The bustle and gossipry of the public room delighted me. Not an occurrence could take place in Bassora but it was whispered in the house of my master ; not an event was prognosticated but the prophecy might be traced to one of his customers. In short, it was the news-room and scandal-factory of the city. Many a worthy Moslem lost his beard on the very spot where his wife had lost her character not an hour before ; and not unfrequently the cause of the one assisted at the disappearance of the other.

“ Excited and amused by the conversation of the customers, I soon became an adept in the business, and at twelve years old, standing upon a stool, I have smoothed the chin of many of the least profitable frequenters of the establishment. But this pleasant state of things could not last for ever.

“ As I grew older I began to twist my turban

* Sweetmeat-maker.

into richer folds, and to give an extra turn to my girdle ; for as I walked through the bazār to operate upon some of our wealthier employers at their own houses, I not unfrequently caught the low murmur of admiration which stole from beneath the yashmacs of the women as I passed them ; and I learnt to understand that my personal advantages far outran my fortunes. At first I smiled as this conviction forced itself upon me, for my vanity was satisfied, and I did not look beyond its indulgence ; but gradually I began to imagine myself injured, and to compare myself with every individual who frequented the house, until I became convinced that I indeed deserved the name which was frequently applied to me of ‘ the handsome Barber of Bassora ;’ and to encourage a horde of romantic and foolish visions that well nigh turned my brain.

“ The few spare piastres which I had formerly spent in tchalva and mahalibè, I now hoarded until they would purchase for me some article of finery ; and I listened with avidity to the tales of the massaldjis when they told the love of the great lady of a princely harem for some lowly one of the land.

“ My beard and mustachios were as black and bright as the wing of the raven ; and I

never failed when I was about to apply the perfumed oil to the shaven head of a customer, to pass my open palm over them as if by accident ; by which means they became thick and glossy, and were the envy of many a proud young Bey, who would have paid every hair with a piastre, could he have called them his own.

“ You may imagine what ensued ; and you will not be surprised to hear that I soon listened in trembling to many a tale of scandal, of which I previously knew all the details. Many comments were made upon my dress, which had gradually become more and more expensive ; and suspicions of the truth were sometimes hinted to me by the gay young Beyzadehs who passed occasionally under my hand ; but as my discretion was even more powerful than my vanity, I affected never to understand their inferences, and they at length grew weary of criticising alike my garments and my humour.

“ I led this life for years ; during which my master died, and left me sole heir to his business, with a trifling sum in money, which I gave in secret to my mother, whose young husband had long ago forgotten that he owed to her his present prosperity, and who felt the sting of poverty coupled with the bitterness of neglect. The

will of Allah was, however, soon accomplished ; for the tears of regret at her past folly which she continually shed, brought her to the brink of the grave, and she sank gently into it, with a blessing upon her lips which was all for me !

“ I resigned to no one my place at the head of her coffin, and I stood and saw the earth flung upon the remains of my misguided but gentle parent ; and when I turned away, I remembered that my brother’s abode was unknown to me, and that I was alone in the world.

“ But this feeling of sadness did not last long ; the path of life was strown with flowers for me, and the death of my mother was a dark cloud which soon passed away from the sky of my existence. I divided my time between the duties of my profession, which I lightened by piquant anecdotes drawn from secret and authentic sources, which bewildered and delighted my listeners ; and by the labours of the toilette, where I worshipped with all the ardour of vanity.

“ Years passed over me : and a new race of beauties afforded me new opportunities of conquest ; I was courted for my personal beauty, and trusted for my discretion ; and I should probably have lived and died happily, had not

my evil stars led me one day at noon under the windows of the harem of a wealthy Bey, who was absent on an expedition in a distant province.

“ To amuse the solitude of his young wife, the Bey had invited to his palace his only sister, who was betrothed to the Pasha of Damascus; and this fair dame, who by no means relished the retirement in which the wife of her brother thought proper to spend the months of his absence, had already decided on departing from Bassora; when on the day in question, as she sat playing with her tusbee on the divan under the casement, gazing through the lattices, and wishing herself far from the dull palace of her kinsman, she chanced to see me pass along the street.

“ ‘ Tchapouk, tchapouk — quick, quick, Sel-häi;’ she exclaimed to a slave who was passing through the apartment; ‘ for the first time I see a handsome man in Bassora — kim der — who is it?’

“ ‘ Effendim;’ replied the maiden, as she glanced through the jalousie; ‘ the sun shines on our street to-day; that is Hussein the Barber.’

“ ‘ Barber!’ echoed the young beauty incredulously; ‘ Mashallah! if the barbers of Bas-sora carry such brows as that, your Beyzadehs must touch the clouds!’

“ ‘ Nevertheless, madam, that is in truth Hussein the barber ; and if the zamparalik* of the city may be depended on, you are not the first young beauty whom his bright eyes have thrallled.’

“ ‘ Ey vah !’ replied the lady ; ‘ you are too quick-witted, Selhäi ; but your barber may well turn the heads of half the city beauties. Does he vend perfumes and essences ?’

“ ‘ Both, and of the best ;’ answered the slave ; when, receiving no further intimation that her presence was required, she proceeded on her errand, and the Bey’s sister was left alone.

“ I shall not weary you with words. Ere long the lady repented her request to quit the city, and the very name of the Pasha of Damascus became distasteful to her ; but she was nevertheless compelled to abide by an arrangement which she had herself made ; and you will not be surprised to hear that ere she took leave of her brother’s wife, I had already disposed of my business, settled all my affairs, and was on my way to the ancient city of Damascus.

“ I had taken care to provide myself with sufficient raiment of goodly fashion and material, to obliterate every trace of the barber from my appearance ; and as the Pasha had sent a party

* Scandal.

of his own people to escort the lady, and some of the slaves of his own harem to attend her, there was little danger of detection when I boldly presented myself at the palace of the Pashalic, and announced myself as the younger son of a noble house, anxious to serve under the Satrap of Damascus.

“ The Yûzbashi of the palace-guard was won by my appearance ; and when, as we stopped to take coffee together in the bazâr, I presented to him an amber mouth-piece which he chanced to admire as we filled our chibouques from my own tobacco-purse, he vowed an eternal friendship with his new and liberal ally. He was a brave young man, and much beloved by the Pasha ; and he might have alarmed my vanity, had he not been disfigured by a scymitar wound which had distorted his features, and given a grim expression to his countenance.

“ With such an advocate, I soon found myself a member of the Satrap’s household ; and as my heart was light, and my humour joyous, I speedily became a favourite in the palace ; but the harem was a sealed book ; and despite all my endeavours, I could not even succeed in addressing one of the slaves.

“ As I had not abandoned my liberty at Bas-

sora to lead the life of a dependant at Damascus, I soon began to repent my precipitation, and to meditate a return to my native city ; when one evening as I was slowly crossing the court-yard to visit the guards, an aged woman, evidently belonging to the Pasha's harem, passed close beside me ; and muttering ' Ekhi kateti—there is something : ' in an under tone, and with an air of mystery, dropped a small embroidered handkerchief at my feet as if by accident, and then shuffled hastily away.

“ I did not immediately stoop to secure the prize ; but stopping suddenly as if by an impulse of thought, I stood for a minute or two motionless ; and then letting fall my own handkerchief upon that which lay on the ground, lest I might be watched from the palace windows, I picked up both together, and thrust them into my girdle.

“ When I had retired to my chamber I lost no time in examining the mysterious handkerchief, and, as I had expected, I found amid its folds a small roll of paper, on which were written these words—

“ ‘ Hussein—you know the pavilion of crimson silk which the Pasha has erected in the garden of the harem — I will be there at midnight. Be silent and cautious. The Rose to the Bulbul.’

“ I read the scroll thrice over before I could believe that my eyes had not deceived me ; and as the conviction slowly forced itself upon my mind that it was indeed no delusion of the fancy, but that I was really summoned to the presence of the Pasha’s bride, my heart became divided between joy and terror. True, I loved the lady ; but the love of a vain young man who has been taught the value of his own attractions, is never sufficiently divested of selfishness to impel him to extremity in the indulgence of his affections. As I felt towards the Pasha’s wife, so had I already felt towards several other beauties ; the sole tie which she possessed upon my heart that was new to its experience, was the pride of a nobler conquest than any it had yet made.

“ With this divided and calm spirit of calculation, the idea of the crimson tent of the harem-garden brought with it a heavy feeling of probable danger. The walls were high ; the nights clear and moonlighted ; the palace-guard zealous and alert ; and I was but too conscious that if I were surprised by the negroes of the Pasha, they would extend little mercy to my crime.

“ I flung myself upon my divan in a tumult of thought. The very hope of such an adventure had brought me to Damascus, and yet now

that it presented itself a foreboding of evil grew upon me which would not be shaken off. There was, nevertheless, no alternative ; my position in the Pasha's household was worse than precarious should I offend his last and favourite wife ; and in our interviews at Bassora, I had had many opportunities of ascertaining that the fair Habè was as uncompromising in her hate as in her love ; and that she would probably not hesitate to sacrifice even me, should she believe me capable of slighting her affection.

“ Thus then I resolved to trust to my felech,* and to obey her summons ; with a firm determination to represent to her during the interview, all the perils which beset us both ; and to implore her for her own sake to bid me farewell for ever. During my residence in the palace, I had heard frightful tales of the Pasha's jealousy, and its effects : and as he was passionately attached to the lovely Habè, I could but apprehend the worst should he discover that she did not return his attachment.

“ With this resolution, I remained quietly in my chamber until the dark clouds of night, powdered with silver drops, draped the pale moon in her robe of midnight ; when stealthily passing

* Constellation.

the palace gates, I crouched along under the wall of the garden until, amid the trees, I saw the golden crescent of the pavilion glittering in the moonlight. Here I paused, and as I glanced cautiously around, I traced a dark shadow on the wall which extended from the summit to within a few feet of the ground. I stealthily approached it, and discovered that it was a shawl which I recognised as belonging to the lady Habè; and I at once understood that it was intended to facilitate my entrance into the garden.

“ For a moment a dread of treachery glanced through my mind, but I dismissed the suspicion as it rose; and having ascertained that the shawl was well secured on the other side, I at once swung myself to the top of the wall, and sprang into the inclosure. My feet had scarcely touched the earth, when my hand was softly grasped, and I was rapidly led on through the darkness of a laurel plantation in the direction of the pavilion.

“ I did not attempt to utter a syllable, for I was convinced that the clasp was that of Habè, but I deceived myself; for as my guide lifted the crimson curtain of the tent, I discovered that I had been conducted thither by a young

and beautiful slave, who, pointing towards a portion of the pavilion which was flooded with moonlight, silently withdrew to a distance.

“ To fling myself at the feet of the lady Habè, and to lift her fair hand to my lips and brow, was the work of a moment ; and as I gazed upon her in the soft crimson light flung over her by the rich curtains of the pavilion, I thought that I had never before beheld any thing so lovely. I forgot my wise resolutions of the evening—I forgot my peril and my perfidy ; and I was pouring out before her all the passionate tenderness of my spirit, when a faint shriek from the young attendant aroused us from our dream of love, as a hideous negro raised the screen of the tent, and glared full upon us with his flashing eyes !

“ ‘ Fly, Hussein, fly ! and fear not for me ;’ hastily whispered the lady : ‘ Geosumin nurissin—you are the light of my eyes ; and your death would destroy me—Fly ! and ere long you shall be convinced that you have nothing to fear !’

“ As she spoke, I sprang to my feet, and would have seized the intruder, but she held me back.

“ ‘ Delhibashi—Prince of madmen ! away with

you!" she exclaimed, as the negro rushed through the garden in the direction of the palace: 'and leave the rest to me.'

"With the disappearance of the negro, my reason returned; and waiting no further bidding, I soon cleared the wall of the Pasha's grounds, and as I fled I heard the shrieks of the lady and her attendant ringing upon the air. The sound added wings to my speed; and availing myself of my knowledge of every avenue of the palace, I was one of the first to present myself in the great hall to inquire the cause of the outcry; having moreover taken the precaution to snatch up another turban as I passed through my apartment, and to gird on my scymitar. I calculated on the re-entrance of the negro through the harem, of which he must possess the key, a secure, but circuitous way; and I was aware that this circumstance would enable me, if I exerted my best speed, at least to reach the salemlick at the same instant as himself.

"My good star was in the ascendant, for the eyes of the Pasha fell on me as he hastily left his chamber to ascertain the nature of the disturbance.

" 'La illaha illallah—there is but one Allah!' he said in a tone of alarm: 'tell me, my good

Toussun ?' (for such was the name that I bore at Damascus) 'tell me, what is all this ?'

" 'May my lord's prosperity increase ;' I replied as calmly as I could ; 'I understand nothing of this tumult, save that I hear the voices of women, shrieking out in terror, as though their souls were escaping through their lips.'

" Further colloquy was prevented by the entrance of a negro, who, trembling with rage, and breathless with haste, flung himself at the feet of the Satrap, exclaiming :

" 'Justice and vengeance, my lord the Pasha ! Justice and vengeance ! Your privacy has been invaded, and your harem polluted by an officer of your own household, by a slave of your own mercy——'

" 'How say you, wretch ?' thundered out the Satrap, drawing his handjar ; 'name the miscreant, that I may stab him with my own hand.'

" 'It is Toussun the Yûzbashi ;' gasped out the negro ; but before he had time to utter another syllable, I sprang beyond the reach of the Pasha's weapon, and boldly confronted my kneeling accuser.

" 'Liar and traitor !' I yelled out with all the

impetuosity which a sense of my danger was calculated to inspire, and conscious that my fate hung upon the events of the next few moments: ‘Whose dog are you that would poison the ears of his Highness with such filth as this? Look at me, miscreant; and dare to say that I have stirred from my post this night——’

“The negro instinctively obeyed; and as he turned his eyes upon me, he was evidently struck by a change in my appearance which he could not explain to himself: and this momentary hesitation saved me.

“‘Vile slave!’ shouted the Pasha; ‘Could you find no one on whom to fasten a lie save my faithful Toussun? the first of my chaoushes whom I met on entering the hall? What is this mystery? But it shall be unravelled at once.’ And so saying, he beckoned to him four of the negro guard; and desiring me to keep strict watch over the trembling wretch whose zeal had brought him nothing but bitterness, he passed into the harem, whence the cries of the women could still be distinctly heard; for this scene, such as I have described it, had scarcely occupied a moment.

“Directly the Satrap disappeared I gave orders to a couple of my palikars to secure the

arms of the crest-fallen guardian of the harem, who wasted his strength in revilings on me, on the women, on fate, and on his own folly ; and, meanwhile, the Pasha was busily investigating the cause of an uproar so unusual in his quiet and orderly household.

“ The result did not transpire until the following morning. The quailing cause of the riot was claimed at my hands by the four negroes who had accompanied the Satrap to the women’s apartments, and carried away no one inquired whither. The Pasha did not appear again ; and all remained silent and tranquil. But I stood on the crater of a volcano ; for at an early hour, another negro, undeterred by the disgrace of his companion, or probably convinced of the truth of his statement, and determined to revenge him, passed into the garden of the harem, and visited the pavilion with the keen glance of curiosity. Leaving the tent, where he found nothing to gratify his hope, he wandered along beneath the wall, and chancing to raise his eyes, he discovered the shawl, which in the alarm and hurry of the previous night had been forgotten.

“ Fortunately for me, the negro had a tongue which outran his wit, and sufficient of his errand transpired before he was admitted to the presence

of the Pasha, to impress upon my mind the necessity of an immediate retreat ; and I at once passed into my chamber to secure upon my person the jewels and money which I had secreted when I entered the service of the Satrap. As I was about to leave the room, I accidentally turned a last glance towards the divan, where I was surprised to see a small parcel folded in a dark handkerchief which was familiar to me. Without waiting to ascertain the nature of its contents, I concealed it beneath my robe, and mounting my horse, which was of the true Arab breed, I made my way to the clothes-bazār, and purchased the costume of an Arab Schiek, which I adjusted in a neglected mosque ; and then without another instant's delay, I hastened to the gate of the city, and passed it at foot's pace, as if careless of time ; but once upon the free plain, I buried the edge of my sharp stirrups in the flanks of my generous Arabian, and away we flew like the wind : danger and death were behind us ; and liberty and life before ; the choice was easy ; and I never drew bit until I felt the willing horse quiver under me as I urged him forward.

“ A few mouthfulls of fresh grass, and a deep draught at a cool stream that rippled

through the dense herbage, soon restored the generous animal; while I refreshed myself by laving my limbs in the clear water, and swallowing some wild figs which I found in the vicinity of the rivulet.

“ As I had purposely avoided all traces of a frequented path, I deemed myself tolerably secure, many hours having elapsed since I left the city; and picqueting my docile Arabian amid the tall grass, I laid myself down close beside him, and soon fell asleep. When I awoke the gray dawn was just breaking over the hills, and I felt the necessity of immediately pursuing my journey. I accordingly roused my horse, who was lying supine upon the earth in all the luxury of repose, and springing again into the saddle, incited him to his best speed. Again my constellation favoured me, for, after a couple of hours of hard riding, I fell in with a caravan that was crossing the Desart, which I immediately joined, greatly to the relief of my exhausted horse, and the furtherance of my own safety.

“ At the next town we reached, I once more changed my dress, and assumed that which I now wear; and then for the first time, I examined the contents of the handkerchief that I

had found in my chamber. You, Moctaleb, have seen them in this chest. I know not with what tale the wily Habè amused the ear of the Pasha, but it is certain that his rage was craftily turned on the negro — and that he lent too ready an ear to the accusations of his beautiful young wife.

“ There was a scroll folded about the disgusting fragments of mortality, that partially explained the truth—thus it ran :—

“ ‘ I told you to trust to me, and I here give you proof that you did not trust in vain. A husband whose head is covered with a napkin, and whose eyes are dim, has revenged his wife upon her enemy, and you on your betrayer. I send you the eye that ventured to watch you—the ear that dared to listen to your words—the foot that followed your path — the hand that drew aside the screen — the heart that ventured to betray—and the dagger that was meant for another breast. I would not accept peace until these trophies were laid upon my carpet — and I send them to you as earnest of my love.’

“ I crushed the paper convulsively as I finished reading it. Could I indeed have loved this woman-fiend ? I took the handkerchief in my hand, with the intention of hurling its contents into the

air ; but a sudden impulse restrained me, and flinging them into the chest whence I had withdrawn my garments, I determined to carry them with me to Bassora, and thence, making some horrible addition to the hoard, to forward them by the next caravan to my tiger-hearted mistress. In order to effect this savage purpose, I prepared them with salt and spices after the Egyptian fashion, by which means they have been preserved. But I have already almost repented my intention ; for the distance which now separates us has left only the memory of her beauty and her love upon the tablet of my soul, while all the horrors of our final meeting appear but as a dark vapour, shedding its gloom over a scene of brightness."

The stranger paused for a moment amid a deep silence ; after which he resumed in an altered tone.

" Other memories and feelings have also grown upon me since I entered my native city. I have recognized, even amid the disfigurement of poverty, my long-lost pilgrim-brother—and I have become conscious that life has better and nobler joys than vengeance."

As he spoke, the tearful Hussein extended his arms to the Khamal, who flung himself into

them, exclaiming ; “ I learnt the truth from the very beginning of your story, my lord and brother ; but I would not darken the sky of your prosperity by telling you that the wretched Husref was the once-happy Emir Hadj—Alas ! alas ! I have also much to tell, but not to-night.”

“ Alhemdullilah — be it even as you will ;” replied Hussein, kissing his lips and forehead : “ I knew you from the first moment when you lifted the chest from the mule in the public street ; and it was to test your probity that I left it in your charge during so many hours. The will of Allah is accomplished ! We have met again ; and we will part no more ; one roof shall in future cover the Hadj-Khamal and the Barber of Bassora.”

PART IV.

CHAPTER XXII.

“MASHALLAH!” said the Pasha, as the story ended; “I do not understand why all the mas-saldjis, let them commence a tale as they will, always finish with love and intrigue. One would think that no other wheel set the world in motion. I had scarcely began to relish the adventures of the Khamal and his employer, when out of a fair beginning grew another history of a woman’s folly! Haif, haif — shame, shame! And such a tissue of improbabilities! One Pasha is as good as another; and Inshallah! there is no fear that any dog of a haramzadeh would venture to enter *my* harem. Why then do the fable-mongers spin their brains into silken

threads, to invent fictions which bear no likeness to the realities of life?"

"Life, your Highness;" replied the disguised Greek, reassured by the obtuse self-sufficiency of his host; "is a mere every-day affair, which, without the drapery of imagination, would be too crude and bare to be looked upon with pleasure; and thus the massaldji is compelled to select the ornaments that appear the most likely to embellish it. Where can they be found more readily than in the love and beauty of woman? Are not her smiles the promised light of Paradise, and her care its contemplated recompense? Her weakness is her triumph; her tenderness, the bond that links her to those by whom she is beloved, and on whom she pours out all the treasures of her soul. It is not that the daring foot of either moslem or giaour would indeed venture to prophane the harem of a True Believer, (though some assert that such things really have been;) but the fable gives so many opportunities to the narrator of weaving sweet thoughts and fancies into his web of fiction, that he turns as trustingly to the conceit as the pilgrim to the holy caba."

"You talk like a woman:" said the Pasha, with an expression of contempt which was only

tempered by his admiration of the sententious awali ; “ and it is not for me to contend with you. Inshallah ! What is written, is written. The Osmanli do not put their beards into the hands of their wives ; they know better. The Frank women, as I have heard, wander up and down with bold brows and steady steps, and the Prophet only can tell the disorder which must reign in their harems, where there are neither bolts, locks, nor negroes : but, Mashallah ! the Moslems are not dogs ! nor their women hadjis, wandering from land to land, and cramming their brains with a thousand idle and unseemly fancies ! Bashustun ! had I lived in those infidel countries, I should have——”

“ Korkma, Effendimou — fear not : ” said Carimfil Hanoum : “ no one will dare to suspect Saïfula Pasha of permitting the dust of disgrace to be scattered upon his head ; and thus the tales of an idle fable-monger should not chafe his humour. The massaldji has done her duty, for she has whiled away two weary hours : but I prefer her zebec to her story, and could almost regret that I cannot, like her, awaken sweet sounds such as those to which we have listened from her rapid fingers.”

“ Alhemdullilah ! when you need music, it

can always be purchased ;” interposed the Satrap abruptly ; “ but the massaldji must not go unrewarded, since you have found amusement in her talent. Remember :” he added, turning to the Aga Baba ; “ when the almè leave the harem, to let this maiden have a purse.”

“ And for myself ;” said the fair Circassian, drawing a handsome ring from her finger ; “ that the awali may not forget her visit to my lord’s harem, I shall reward her with this jewel. Approach, Sèidika, and receive it from my own hand.”

Maniolopolo obeyed with a joy which gave to his movements as he traversed the floor, an impetuosity almost calculated to betray him ; but a warning glance from his sister recalled his caution, and when he bent his knee before the lady, and pressed her hand to his lips in token of his acknowledgment, although he held it longer than perfect good-breeding and respect altogether warranted when their relative situations were considered, this slight deviation from the rules of etiquette was only attributed by the lookers-on to an excess of gratitude.

The mention of remuneration implied the speedy departure of the almè ; and shortly afterwards the Pasha, remarking on the lateness

of the hour, descended from the sofa; and having taken leave of his young wife and her friend, left the apartment, followed by the negroes.

The screen had scarcely fallen behind them when Maniolopolo once more flung himself at the feet of the Circassian. "My life! my soul! my sultana!" he murmured, as she hid her tearful eyes upon his shoulder: "do we indeed meet again, after years of miserable absence? Can it be your brow which rests upon my bosom? your hand that I clasp in mine? Am I still dear to you as when we parted?"

"Maniolopolo;" whispered the agitated Carimfil: "though it be sin to tell you so, you are to me more than life or light—janum sinindir—my soul is your's—not a day but I have thought of you—not a night but you have been in my dreams—not an hour but I have loved you. The present has been nothing to me—the past full of your memory, and the future one wild hope of looking upon you once again. The hope is accomplished—you are here, and you love me still; and now I ask only to die."

"Talk not of death, katoun—my loved one;"

answered Maniolopolo: "the grave is not for such as thee; or even there happiness might come. Sèverim sèni — I love you: you have been torn from me; and I have suffered hopeless misery for years. When I remember that your youth has been blighted by the passion of a despot, my brain burns, and my pulses quiver — *Derdinden oldum beihoud* — my torment makes me mad! And can you let me continue thus to suffer? Do you condemn me to another banishment which can end only in despair? You know how I have loved you, how I love you still: and you are silent — cruel Carimfil! but the blow is less bitter from your hand than from that of another; unless that other strike me at your feet, that I may expire with your image before my eyes."

"Alas!" said the trembling beauty; "Y'Allah — in the name of Heaven, what would you ask of me?"

"If your own heart whisper not my meaning;" replied the Greck; "no words of mine could make it welcome. My life and death are in your hands, and you must deal with me as you deem fitting."

"Maniolopolo:" sobbed the Pasha's wife; "you break my heart. Have you not been the

one dream of my blighted existence? and do you now speak coldly to me that I may learn to fear as well as love you."

"Astaferallah — Heaven forbid!" said the young Greek: "but think you that I can calmly see my bulbul caged and prisoned, without seeking to burst the bars of its captivity, and to lead it back once more to the wild wood and the free valley of its happiness? We cannot deceive ourselves, Carimfil; we must live for each other, or perish. To save ourselves we must fly together—why do you tremble thus, guzum, my eyes? Do you leave behind you one memory of joy? Oh, no — nor will I think so meanly of you as to believe that your chains have been less heavy, because they are of gold. I thank you for that indignant blush, and that firm pressure of my hand — I knew it — the proud Pasha and his gilded harem will be remembered only with horror, while the green plains and woody mountains of our beloved Circassia will be welcomed as never yet they have been by mortal."

"Would that we were indeed there!" sighed out the timid beauty: "but we are beset by difficulties, surrounded with dangers, watched by jealous eyes—How then can we escape?"

“Carimfil, janum — my soul ;” steadily replied the Greek : “all is possible to those who love——”

“And your sister?”

“Think not of me ;” said Katinka, as she approached the divan, after having carefully dispersed the attendants of the lady in every direction, and diverted the attention of the almè, who were whispering among themselves gay comments on the prolonged conference of the lovers : “Think not of me—I should but impede your flight, which I would rather strive to secure. But now you must consent to separate, if you will not ruin all by your own imprudence ; you, Maniolopolo, we can find whenever we may require your counsel ; and you will do well to set about your projects without delay, if your brain be sufficiently free from the cobwebs of passion to enable you to act rationally ; and you, Katoun, have need of repose, lest your strength fail in the hour of trial. Nevrestè and your sister almè await you, fair Sèidika ;” she added laughingly ; “and should the Aga Baba chance to find you here on his return, his questions may be difficult to answer. Away, then, while you are unsuspected, and still retain your reason.”

The remonstrance of Katinka, unpalatable as it was could not be neglected, for even Maniopololo himself was compelled to admit its propriety ; and after another embrace, and another murmured assurance of eternal constancy, he tore himself from the feet of the beautiful Carimfil, and left the palace with the almè.

On arriving at the Theriarki T'charchi he hastily flung off his disguise, and bidding a hurried farewell to Nevrestè, in whose hand he placed the purse which had been bestowed on him by the Pasha, he was about to quit the building when he remembered that he had not seen Mherpirwir since he left the harem. The devotion of the gentle girl had touched his heart ; and, even occupied as it was by the image of Carimfil, he could not refuse at least the affection of a brother to the timid maiden who had bruised her own spirit to contribute to his happiness.

When he returned to seek her, the almè had already left the outer room, and had retired to the inner apartments where they deposited the most costly of their ornaments ; and he was about to turn away disappointed, when by the faint light of the solitary and untrimmed lamp which stood in a niche of the discoloured wall, he discovered Mherpirwir, crouched down in one

corner of the saloon, with her arms crossed upon her knees, and her head bent over them. Her lotus crown lay on the ground beside her : but the fever of her brain had withered the flowers, and they were flaccid and faded. Her zebec had a broken string ; and her veil was flung beside it, as though in the wretchedness of the moment she had been reckless and impatient.

Maniolopolo softly advanced : he murmured her name ; and at the sound of his voice the dancing-girl sprang up, and cast herself at his feet :—" It is in vain to contend with destiny !" she whispered hoarsely ; " I know all that you would tell me ; I am an almè—my passion is a jest—my love a mockery — I know it — I knew it from the first — and I strove against it until the nerves of my heart quivered with agony ! You love another — I know that also ; and she is fair and gentle ; and the world has never yet breathed with its foul fetid breath upon her name, and poisoned her existence. She is worthy of your affection — and yet, in nursing it she becomes even as I am — a banned and blighted thing ! Oh, think of this — it is a frightful truth ; and you close your eyes against it, because you have not courage to look upon it

calmly. Nay, withdraw not thus your hand. I am wild with anguish, and I know not what I say ; yet *you* should pardon me. You, whom I have loved from the first moment that I looked upon you. I have been the by-word of my companions because my heart was shut against the inroads of passion ; now I shall be their scorn, that I have bowed beneath it where it was worse than hopeless."

"Mherpirwir, be calm, be comforted ;" said the Greek soothingly : "it is but a passing fancy ; you are young and beautiful, and ——."

"Do *you* tell me this?" asked the girl almost sternly ; "You, who have left your home, and dared the very bitterness of death to look upon one whom you loved in your early years? But you are right, Effendim, you are right : I am young ; and, they tell me, beautiful ; and I must learn to suffer patiently, for the heart does not break at once, and I may have to nurse its anguish for long and bitter years. True, the lip-deep vows of many an idler may tear the wound asunder, and the blood-drops may fall one by one like molten lead, but I shall learn to bear it. So, leave me, Effendim, leave me ; and forget me, unless the

poor and despised dancing-girl may hope to be remembered kindly."

"Listen to me, Mherpirwir:" said Maniolo-polo, as he raised her from the floor, and threw his arm round her trembling form: "You know all my story — I have concealed nothing from you, and I love you as a brother; your gentle and ready services have lightened my task, and cheered my spirit; and I would not have you think of me as of an ingrate. But my heart and my hope are yonder" — and he pointed towards the Pasha's palace: "My own safety, even my life, are at stake: and I peril all on that one venture. How, then, could I be worthy of your love, when every thought, every care, every anxiety would be lavished on another?"

"You are right;" murmured the maiden, calmly withdrawing herself from his clasp; "we can be nothing to each other: and mine has been indeed an idle, and a bitter dream. Farewell, Effendim; I love you; I shall love you to the end of my existence. Do you remember your ballad at the Tchorbadji's. You can now judge of its truth; you read my fate, and I am prepared to meet it."

"We cannot part thus—" said Maniolopolo, deeply moved by her emotion.

“Ne apalum—what can we do?” asked Mherpirwir sadly: “Have you not convinced me that we can be nothing to each other? She to whom you have given your heart loves you even as I do—and for yourself—I feel that you return her tenderness, and to me it will be easier to die than to be despised.”

“That were impossible!” earnestly exclaimed the Greek.

“I thank you for the assurance, but I shall not dare the trial. Seek not to see me again. My good Nevrestè will bear with my grief, and it will work its own cure. Farewell, Effendim—merhamet eylè bendènè—have pity on me, and linger no longer. Allah esmarledek—may He take you into his holy keeping; and believe that one heart will beat for you even in the death-hour—the bruised heart of the poor dancing-girl who dared to love you!”

Maniolopolo would have replied with more soothing words, but the almè waited not to hear them. Like a young fawn startled by a distant sound, she bounded from the side of the Greek, and lifting the screen which veiled the entrance of the inner apartment, disappeared in an instant from his sight. He called her in his gentlest tone: “Mherpirwir, guzum! only a moment—

only a word — Y'Allah, in the name of the Prophet! only a moment. Mherpirwir, will you not reply?"

'The echoes of the apartment were the sole answer.

"Nay, then, I will follow you!" said the excited young man; and he had laid his daring hand upon the screen, when it was suddenly raised, and Nevrestè stood before him.

"Ne var — what is this?" she asked sternly; "Have we put our necks into the noose of danger for your sake, young sir, only that your's should be the hand to strain the cord? What means this violence? Sen chok adam! 'tis a bold deed to frighten half a score of women."

"Hear me, mother;" said the agitated Maniolopolo: "on my soul you wrong me! Mherpirwir loves me, and I ——"

"Bak — see!" exclaimed Nevrestè in angry scorn: "an almè no sooner serves a stranger, than he believes that she is his, heart and spirit. Fye on you, young sir! Mherpirwir has been wooed by Beys and nobles, and she has slighted all their vows and protestations. Aye, even with the blind scorn of the world poured out upon her fair young head—a world which judges

only through its own short-sightedness; and which dreams not that the despised and hired dancing-girl has sacrificed her pride and her self-dignity to support an aged mother, and a beggared family;—even with this foul scorn preying upon her heart, she has been just to herself; and would you — you, whom she has served, be among her enemies? Leave us in peace: we cannot now avail you, and to-morrow we depart.”

“Mother;” said Maniolopolo, deeply affected by the honest energy of the old woman: “I cannot suffer you to bid me farewell with such words as these. Without your timely and generous assistance, I should now have been wretched and hopeless, if not reckless and suspected. How, then, can you attribute to me a falseheartedness for which I should deserve to suffer death?”

“Effendim;” replied Nevrestè calmly; “I do not seek to wrong you, but—you are a Greek. We have served you, and you have liberally rewarded our exertions: there can be no further tie between us. We are never likely to meet again; but should we indeed do so—remember—that for your own sake, and for that of Mherpir-

wir, we meet as strangers. Oghour ola—Heaven speed you. Our conference is ended.”

As she ceased speaking, the old woman made a step backward ; and when the screen again fell, Maniolopolo was once more alone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AFTER this very unsatisfactory parting from the almè, Maniolopolo bent his steps to the fendûk where he lodged; and as he swiftly and cautiously threaded the streets, he revolved a thousand wild and impracticable schemes for the escape of his beloved Carimfil. But his good star forsook him: he could imagine no plausible method of effecting his purpose; and he at length resolved to endeavour to obtain some rest, and to leave to the morrow the decision at which he found it impossible to arrive in his present excited state.

In the morning he was awoke by the entrance of his servant, who presented to him a small roll of papyrus, with a seal attached to it by a long

lock of silky hair. He raised himself hastily on his cushions, and opened the scroll; the character was that of his sister.

“I have arranged all;” thus was it worded; “Your weeping and trembling beauty has at last consented. You will see me no more, but I do not ask you to let this conviction cast a single cloud over your fortune. At our last night’s meeting, you forgot the poor Katinka in a dearer and more absorbing interest; continue to do so still; our fates cannot now be blent: our views and hopes are different. I shall not tell you wherefore, for I will not occupy your mind with thoughts of me, and my future life. Make all your arrangements for sudden flight. Remember the skill of Carimfil in guiding her fiery steed over the plains of Circassia — then it was mere sport which urged her on—now she will peril her happiness upon her speed, and it will not fail. Provide for her the costume of a Mameluke; her motions will thus be free, and her sex unguessed at.

“To-morrow at day-dawn she will await you at the western gate of the city, near the cemetery; place the dress which you design for her in the tomb of Hadji Hafiz in the valley; and receive the last greeting of

“Your Sister.”

“By the Saint Panagia !”* said Maniolopolo to himself, as he refolded the missive ; “Katinka has gained no small share of philosophy by her residence among the Osmanli ! She throws me off as a sultana casts away her slipper ; but she does not fail me in my need, and her plans are clear and speedy. Yet, can I confide in their sufficiency ? — in their prudence ? — I must, for doubt is madness, unless I can suggest a mode of action more sure and safe. Why how now, Stancho ?” he continued aloud, to a Greek adventurer whom he had taken into his service on his arrival in the city ; “You have a brow as moody as a papas who has been mulcted of his second trout on a day of fast. What news have you ?”

“Oriste, Tchelebis ?—What is your pleasure, sir ?” asked Constantine, turning suddenly towards his master.

“Nay, no delay ;” said Maniolopolo ; “I am in no mood to brook it ; for I must be up and in the bazār within an hour.”

“You will do well to reflect ere you walk the city streets again ;” was the reply of the domestic ; “for the Selictar-Aga of the Pasha has visited the fendûk this morn-

* Virgin.

ing, and has asked a few questions, having you for their object, which are scarcely palatable."

"How say you?" exclaimed Maniolopolo, turning ashy pale. "The Selictar-Aga? Did you see him yourself? Are you sure that it was not the Aga Baba?"

"The Tchelebis knows best what business the chief negro of the Pasha's harem may have to discuss with him;" said Stancho drily; "but the worthy functionary of this morning was none other than the Sword-bearer. The Aga Baba may perhaps follow."

"Silence, fool!" thundered out the young man; "have you no wit save that which exists in deepening difficulty? Speak out — what have you to say?"

"The Tchelebis reminds me;" said the unabashed Stancho; "of the fancy of one of our old authors in the good days when Greece was a great republic, and all her sons were heroes: if I remember rightly, it was that of a man who heated and cooled his pillauf with the same breath; and by St. Nicholas! the Tchelebis first tells me to be silent, and then to speak; and doubtlessly expects to be obeyed in both cases."

“Do not urge me further ;” said Maniopololo ; “What did you hear?”

“That the Pasha desired to know the name and nation of every stranger in the city, and that he had learnt the abode of one in this fendûk, about whom he was most solicitous — and, in short, Sir :” added the man, suddenly dropping his flippant tone, and exhibiting some feeling ; “you have been kind and generous to me since I entered your service, and even at some personal risk I have deemed it my duty to apprise you that you are in danger, either in your purse or person — and, for you know best where you have spent the many hours during which I have neither seen nor heard of you — perhaps, in both.”

“You are an honest fellow after all, Stancho ;” said his master warmly ; “but your zeal has outrun your reason : my personal safety cannot be endangered, for I have done nothing——”

Maniopololo paused suddenly, for his conscience smote him ; and he profited by his pause to spring from his cushions, and prepare himself for the business of the day.

“Tchelebis ;” said the domestic gravely ; “as you seem to persist in your purpose of leaving

the house, I must speak, and you will then act as you deem best. I have reason to know that you are a marked person, and I forewarn you that some evil will happen if you are not cautious. Before you arrived in this city I had suffered poverty and hardship: I was a Greek; and twice I have undergone the bastinado as a criminal, in order that the Turkish delinquent might escape: in my wretchedness I complained to the Cadi, and he recompensed my faith in his justice with fresh blows and fresh invectives. I laid my head in the dust at the feet of the Pasha, and I was reviled as a raïah and a rascal; and put forth with hooting and contempt. You are my countryman, and since you have taken me into your service I have been secured alike from want and from persecution; but you have become yourself a mark for extortion, or it may be, violence. Confide then in me: let me follow your fortunes; and there is no risk I will not run for you; the rope is already about my neck, and it can but be tightened an hour or two sooner or later."

"Are you true or a traitor, Constantine?" asked Maniolopolo in very excusable doubt.

The man replied by flinging himself upon his knees, pressing his two forefingers and his thumb

closely together, and making the sign of the cross seven times with extraordinary rapidity : as he called upon the name of the Panagia and half the saints in the calendar to testify to his truth.

“ Stancho ;” said his master after the hesitation of a few moments ; “ I will trust you, for I have no alternative. If I can escape this day from the tyranny of these rascally Turks, (who will all be d——d in the next world, which is some consolation !) I shall be beyond the city walls early to-morrow morning, and may laugh at their beards. And now, my good Stancho ; what do you advise for to-day ?”

“ That you follow me to the terrace ;” replied the quick-witted Greek ; “ and remain there for a few moments until I prepare the family of Aneste, whose court it overlooks, to conceal you until the dusk. They are needy and avaricious ; old Dorcas, the mother, would sell you the few teeth which still remain in her head for a handful of paras ; and her husband Alexis has been beaten and kicked until he has learnt to believe that he came into the world for no other purpose. The Virgin help them ! they have another misfortune to contend with in the shape of a pretty daughter, who entertains all the idle

papas* of the parish with sweet words and winning smiles: and the papas, while they look at her, drink the old man's rakè, and eat the old woman's kibaubs, which makes things worse; therefore, I can answer for it that the prospect of gaining a few piastres will at once induce them to conceal you until you think fit to leave the city. The little Estafania will prepare your food with her own hands; and I will take care to procure for you any disguise that you may think it proper and expedient to adopt."

"Tell me, Constantine;" said Maniolopolo, fixing his keen eye steadily on his attendant: "how felt you when you were spurned from the gate of the proud Pasha's palace, and cast forth like an infected animal?"

"Do you ask *how* I felt?" demanded Stancho in reply, as he ground his teeth, and instinctively raised his clenched hand to his breast, and grappled idly for a second for the dagger, which, had it not been forbidden to a raïah, he would have worn there: "Was I not a Greek? and had I not been insulted, stricken, and reviled? I swore an oath——" he paused a moment,

* Greek priests.

while a fierce expression of vindictiveness swept like a storm-cloud across his features: "a deep and wordless oath, that should the hour ever come when the haughty despot might be smitten by my hand, I would drive the dagger home — home — until its poisoned blade had drained his heart!"

"There are wounds deeper than any that a dagger can inflict, my good Stancho;" said Maniolopolo, as he grasped the arm of his excited attendant: "would'st thou assist in smiting the soul of the Satrap, when his person is beyond thy reach?"

"Steadily — unshrinkingly — to have a full and sharp revenge I would peril alike soul and body."

"Then from this hour we are brothers:" said Maniolopolo: "and now listen, and that attentively: for on the next four-and-twenty hours depend our fate."

The attendant seated himself on a low stool near the divan; and with his gaze rivetted on his master, and a bitter smile upon his lips, drank in the whole history of Maniolopolo's love, despair, and renewed hope. The tale was a long one, but it was told with the voluble eloquence of a Greek lover, and it seemed to

the delighted Stancho to have scarcely occupied an hour.

“ And you have really trod the harem floor, and looked upon the pride of the despot’s heart — the hidden pearl of his casket ! May St. Constantine watch over your deathbed ! Oh, that it were my happy fate to tell him this — to watch the flushing of his brow, the grinding of his teeth, the trembling of his limbs — to catch the gasping curse that would fall back upon his heart for want of breath to utter it — to yell into his ears that he has been duped and fooled by a Greek — a raïah—and an infidel ! But I stay your utterance, Tchelebis ; my joy has maddened me — and now what remains to be done ? ”

The emotion of Constantine was too great to be feigned ; and Maniolopolo, Greek though he was, and consequently prepared for guile and falsehood in his countryman, at once perceived that he might safely confide in the bitter hate which Stancho nursed against the Pasha, and which would be satisfied by the injury of which he would become an instrument, more securely than by any sentiment of a less revolting nature. He did not hesitate, therefore, to explain to him the whole project of the lady Carimfil’s escape ;

and when the man left him, it was to provide disguises for the whole party, so soon as he had secured a temporary asylum for his master in the house of Alexis Aneste.

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHEN he was left to himself, Maniolopolo did not suffer his thoughts to stray into the future; the hurried retrospect by which he had imparted to Constantine the incidents of his past life, had brought before him, in all their first freshness and beauty, every little detail connected with his early love which had rendered it the charm and solace of his existence. He recalled every scene amid which he and his beloved Carimfil had wandered together—the river-bank, green with short crisp herbage, and sprinkled with flowers — the forest-path overhung with a dense foliage that cast the sunshine aside, or made it fall flickering through the leaves, painting golden arabesques upon the earth — the rocky height

where, beneath a canopy of jagged stone, with a torrent rushing and boiling not a hundred paces from them, and falling like thunder into the valley, they had sat together, with a peace of heart and a blessedness of spirit forming a beautiful contrast from the wild and savage scene around them. He remembered, too, how they had been parted; and the months of anguish and despair that had ensued, until the letter of his sister had once more awakened a bright hope within him, and sent him forth a wanderer yet again over the earth.

And the pilgrim had reached his Mecca—the worshipper had knelt before the shrine of his fondest faith—and his heart beat high as he felt the exciting consciousness of his metempsychosis.

But his sister? Here all was mystery—She might have fled with them; her bolder temper would have sustained the drooping spirits of the more timid Circassian; but she had talked of an eternal separation, and had bidden him forget her, or remember her only with cheerfulness, as one over whose fate his own could no longer exercise an influence.

Maniolopolo was still musing on this mysterious renunciation of his only remaining relative,

his once fondly attached sister, when Constantine stole into the room, and bade him follow silently and immediately to the terrace, as he had heard the voice of the Selictar-Aga in the court-yard of the inn, and had seen a couple of the Pasha's guard lounging in the street, like men waiting for a summons.

The young man needed no second warning—the detention, even of an hour, let it terminate as it might, would be ruinous to him at the present juncture; and he had, during the absence of Stancho, secured all his most valuable property upon his person. That active emissary had also profited by the past hour to warm the hearts of old Dorcas and her spirit-bowed help-mate, by the most ready and efficient means, towards his master: and consequently on their arrival on the terrace beneath which stood the hovel of the sordid couple, they found that every facility had been afforded for their descent.

Having seen his employer safely on his legs, and drawn up and replaced the shawl of his turban which had assisted in his escape, Stancho left the terrace; and on his return to the chamber of Maniolopolo, found that he had only preceded by five minutes the Selictar-Aga of the Pasha, who entered and inquired with great courtesy after the health and well-being of his

master. The wily attendant replied with a politeness even more exaggerated than that of the Satrap's functionary : and in reply to the next question of his visiter, answered readily that the Effendi was at the hammām,* where he had just left him to seek for a bottle of essence which he had forgotten.

“ I was told :” said the Selictar-Aga, with considerable emphasis : “ that he yet slept.”

“ It must have been that lying Israel the Tchibout,† who keeps the door, that so misled your highness :” replied Stancho calmly ; “ the dog is for ever blundering in the simplest matters, and overturning the pillauf of his neighbours.” And as he spoke, he busied himself in preparing a chibouque for his unwelcome guest, who took possession of the divan with a gravity which shewed that he had no intention of immediately vacating his position.

Coffee followed the pipe, which was prepared at a mangal just without the door of the chamber ; and as the fumes of the tobacco curled from the nostrils of the doughty Sword-bearer, he saw fit to pit his talents at diplomacy against those of the quick-witted and wily

* Public bath.

† Vile Jew.

Greek. It was the combat of the fox and the buffalo.

“ I have forgotten the name of your master ;” he said with affected unconcern ; “ nor am I quite certain that I remember whence he comes.”

“ Your highness may well suffer the first to escape you :” smiled Stancho, as he stood with his arms folded upon his breast, in obsequious attendance upon the man of office ; “ for it has so strange and unnatural a sound that I at once abandoned all hope of——”

“ But you are yourself a Greek—your tongue betrays you :” interrupted the Selictar-Aga, with what he considered to be a consummate stroke of policy.

“ May the ears of my lord never fail him ;” replied the imperturbable Stancho ; devoutly wishing them nailed fast to the wall, beside those of one of his ancient employers, a certain Greek baker who was affixed to his own door for supplying bread in more minute quantities to his customers than was desirable ; “ but I cannot speak any Frank dialect.”

“ And is the stranger whom you serve really a Frank ?” demanded the envoy.

“ As truly as that your slave is a Christian ;”

replied Stancho, who had some private doubts of the fact when he remembered that he had twice worn the turban; and had made a pilgrimage to Mecca, with the produce of which pious journey he had fled to this distant province, and lived comfortably among his countrymen until he had lavished his ill-gotten gains; “As truly as that your slave is a Christian.”

“La illaha illallah — there is but one Allah! and you are an Infidel, and less than a dog before the eyes of the blessed Prophet;” said the Sword-bearer, as he gravely smoothed down his beard, and the Greek bowed meekly beneath the taunt; “I had heard that the traveller was your countryman.”

Stancho replied by a second negative.

“I am weary of the quiet of this tranquil city:” pursued the Selictar-Aga condescendingly; “and I love to talk with strangers of the lands through which they have passed; of the Rustems* of their own countries; and of the wonders that they have seen. When will the Effendi your master return from the hammām? I would converse with him.”

“He bade me hasten with the essence;” re-

* Heroes.

plied Stancho: "and prepare his horse for two hours hence. These Franks, your highness, ever ride like Tatars when they return from the bath, instead of quietly smoking or sleeping like good Moslems."

"Mashallah! they do well:" said the Sword-bearer sententiously; "they can smoke and sleep on their divans in their own countries, where men run about at mid-day with paper-lanterns, or grope their way in partial darkness. Shekiur Allah—to His name be all praise! they come here to see the sun, and they do well to take their fill of it while they can—I have said it."

"Janum sinindir—my soul is your's:" said the Greek, in affected admiration of the erudition of his companion; "What are they but dogs, and the fathers of dogs—And what wills my lord that I should say to the Effendi?"

The Selictar-Aga hesitated for a moment, and then exclaimed: "Wallah billah—by the Prophet! I must know this Frank: he is surely a hakeem,* and I would ask his counsel; but enough for to-day. Tell him that I will dip my fingers into his pillauf to-morrow at the

* Doctor.

evening meal: to-day I have other projects: but let him await my coming as I have said, for I shall be here without fail; and perchance I may turn upon him the light of the Pasha's countenance."

"Allah esmarladek;" murmured the Greek submissively: "he will surely be on the threshold at the appointed hour."

"It will be well for both of you that it should be so:" said the Selictar-Aga, as he descended from the sofa, and thrust his feet into his slippers to depart; and there was something sinister in his manner of uttering the remark which would have satisfied Stancho, had he ever entertained a doubt of the fact, that the intentions of the Sword-bearer and his master were anything but friendly to Maniolopolo.

"The sapient Turk is as slow-witted as a tortoise," he muttered to himself as the portly functionary slowly descended the stair, and mounted his over-fed horse, which was held by a couple of fine-looking serudjes* in the court of the fendûk: "we shall be galloping over sand before he descends to the city! Saint Nicholas, what a race to govern a land like

* Grooms.

this, and to bow the neck of the Christian —But the day will come—the day will come——” and with this vague, though apparently consolatory ejaculation, he bowed low as the grave Osmanli rode slowly away without deigning to acknowledge his salutation.

CHAPTER XXV.

“KARA!” shouted the Aga Baba of Saïfula Pasha to one of the negro guard of the harem, about an hour before dawn the following morning, as they both lay upon their cushions in an anti-room off the great gallery, with their unsheathed scymitars beside them; “Kara — ne var—what is that?—I heard a noise.”

“The wind in the cedar-trees outside the casement, perhaps; or that accursed cat that the spoiled Greek woman chooses to fondle, because she knows that I loathe the beast;” was the sulky answer: “Aye, I knew it;” he continued, as a second rustling in the gallery caused the Aga Baba to raise himself on his elbow to listen; “there it goes over the balus-

trade of the gallery, leaping into the moonlight ; Allah bela versin — may misfortune overtake it ! To be awakened from a dream of home and liberty by an accursed cat — Amān, 'tis too much !” And with a deep sigh, the negro turned his face from the door, and prepared to sleep again ; an example which his superior, after listening for another moment and suffering no further interruption, very judiciously followed.

The momentary disturbance had, however, acted so powerfully on the nerves of the zealous Aga Baba, that he slept only to dream that all the women of the harem were escaping over the galleries, and dancing sarabands in the moonlight, where a hundred profane eyes were looking on them ; and when at last his master's fair and favourite wife appeared before him, led into the very circle of the mazy figure by the stately Greek slave, the dreamer awoke with a groan that in an instant startled him into a perfect consciousness of the cause of this terrific vision ; and dreading lest it might not indeed have been the cat which roused him from his first slumber, he determined to satisfy himself that all was quiet in the harem ; and accordingly he made the tour of the apartments, tried the

doors, and startled more than one of the fair inmates, who were not slow in applying to him sundry epithets by no means flattering to his personal vanity.

Reassured by the result of his survey, the Aga Baba once more resigned himself to sleep; but he might more safely have trusted to his first suspicion; for the favourite cat of Katinka had slumbered peacefully on a cushion throughout the whole night; and nevertheless the sounds upon the gallery had been no illusion of a half-awakened fancy.

When the ladies of the harem came forth one by one from their chambers, each asked the other to account for the non-appearance of the beautiful Circassian and her friend; and a long hour went by before the small hand of Katinka was seen drawing aside the screen that veiled the apartment which she shared with Carimfil. Jests and questions welcomed her; but she did not return the pleasantries of her companions as she was accustomed to do; and pressing her finger on her lip, she besought quiet for her friend, who was indisposed and required rest.

In an instant all was anxiety and solicitude; a thousand maladies were enumerated, and as many remedies suggested; but Katinka put all

proffers of service steadily aside; and only enjoining quiet, returned, as she affirmed, to watch beside the invalid.

The day wore on : the shadows grew shorter and shorter — it was noon : again they fell upon the earth, and stretched slowly to greater length, like the limbs of a slumbering giant. The fair inmates of the harem had left the bath; had slept through the hot hours upon their flower-sprinkled cushions; and were wandering through the palace-gardens : it was verging towards sunset : and still the Greek girl remained in the closed apartment, whence no sound issued save that of her light foot as she occasionally moved across the floor.

Twice the Aga Baba beat upon the door, and declared his intention to enter; but each time he was deterred by a prolonged “H-u-s-h!” from the subdued voice of Katinka. He grew restless and unquiet, and walked through the harem, murmuring a few words to himself in a low tone, of which “hakeem” and “Pasha” were alone audible. Occasionally he bent his ear, and listened, as he stopped before the embroidered screen which veiled the door of the apartment : but all was still; and at length his restlessness grew into suspicion, and without any

preliminary warning, he softly drew back one of the battants, and entered.

On a pile of satin cushions immediately beneath one of the windows lay a lovely form, but the face was hidden from the officious intruder by a profusion of long glossy hair, and by an arm of dazzling whiteness which was flung across the face. The couch of the Greek girl had not been occupied, for the silver-fringed sheet was smoothly laid back as it had been left by the attendant slaves on the preceding evening; and when the Aga-Baba looked round to inquire from the fair Katinka the cause of this unnecessary vigil, he found that, save the sleeping beauty on the cushions, he was alone. In an instant the truth flashed upon him. He had been duped ! Mischief had been at work in the harem, and his vigilance had slumbered ! He sprang towards the low couch : he grasped the rounded arm : he gazed into the eyes that met his, with an expression half mockery and half apprehension ; and his breath failed, and his knees smote together as he beheld—Katinka !

“ And the lady Carimfil — the *sosun* of the Pasha — the wife of his highness ” — he gasped out ; “ where is she ? ”

“ Ne bilirim—what do I know ? ” asked the

wily Greek in reply : “ I have slept ; and I dreamt that she had escaped—and—”

“ Wallah billah — by the Prophet ! I believe that you are laughing at my beard ;” muttered the negro from between his clenched teeth : “ but have a care ! proud slave, have a care—there are deep waves, strong cords, and sharp blades within reach of a ready arm. Beware lest——”

“ Slave in your teeth, vile tool of a dishonoured master !” exclaimed the Greek girl springing to her feet, and extending her clenched hand in haughty menace ; her long hair streaming over her shoulders and falling far below her waist, and her slight frame trembling with passion : “ Slave in your teeth, foul miscreant ! who pressed the pillow of selfish indulgence when you should have looked to the interests of your too trusting master ! Where were you, and your still more abject followers, when the giaour stole upon the privacy of the harem, and wiled the dove from her nest ? Where were you when the eagle swooped, that you heard not his scream, that you marked not the shadow of his wings ? Off, to your injured lord, and tell him how doughtily you have done your duty.”

“Lahnet be Sheitau—curse on the devil, and on thee, his handmaiden!” exclaimed the Aga Baba, undaunted by this display of feminine energy: “Listen to me, woman! Do you know the price of this night’s work!” and he drew closer to her, and hissed out in a voice that was unearthly in its shrillness; “Can you estimate the penalty of your treachery. I was her guardian, and my arm and my weapon were vowed to her security—you were her companion; you were beside her sleeping and waking—our peril is equal—one of us two must die.”

“Malumumdr — I know it;” was the calm and unshrinking answer; “and I can tell thee even more than this. The contest may seem to be an unequal one — a woman is pitted against an Aga Baba—and yet”—and she laughed a low and bitter laugh: “the case is not so desperate, when the woman is young, beautiful, and a Greek. This neck;” and as she spoke, she grasped it with her slender fingers; “was never meant for the bowstring.”

“Bakalum — we shall see!” growled the enraged negro.

“We waste time;” added the fearless Kattinka; “the Pasha is judge between us: I

have no words to lavish on a slave like thee." And the astonished functionary found himself urged to the very measure with which he hoped to have brought the trembling Greek girl quailing to his feet.

"Allah kerîm;" he muttered as he turned away trembling with dissembled rage; "this tigress must be crushed, or I am a lost man!"

But it was far more easy for the spirit-stricken Aga Baba to quit the presence of the Medusa-like beauty, than to present himself in that of the Pasha. What account could he give of his own blindness? As he asked himself the question, he remembered the episode of the sleepy negro, who had amused him with the conceit of the cat leaping into the moonlight; and being bewildered as to the next step which it was necessary for him to take in order to secure his own safety, he determined to calm his brain, and to collect his ideas by applying the bastinado to the unlucky subordinate, whose indolence had conduced in so eminent a degree to the catastrophe of the night.

"Anna sena, baba sena — I will destroy his father and mother;" he muttered, as he ground his teeth until his jaws ached with the violence of their contact; "When the bowstring comes to

my neck, if come it must, I shall at least know that he has not quite escaped.—But that woman—that devil—why did I shrink before her gaze when it will so soon be turned on me in supplication? Why did I quail beneath her voice, which will so soon expire in a smothered shriek? Inshallah! I felt as though I withered beneath the influence of the Evil Eye.”

A few more moments elapsed, and then a stifled groan was heard, and a wailing cry; a few heavy blows, a fall, and the dragging of painful footsteps, which seemed as though the agony of a lifetime pressed them into the earth.

The Aga Baba was soothed for the moment by this seasonable exercise of his authority; but only for a moment; for as the maimed negro crawled away, the recollection of his ill-starred position returned upon him with startling distinctness; and he felt as though his head was already rolling at the feet of the incensed and injured Pasha.

What was to be done? His errand, though death-fraught, must be executed at once—True, he was to contend only against a woman; but he could not conceal from himself that there was about her an energy which would struggle even

to the death ; and that she was conscious of her advantage.

The brute force was on his side ; but the subtlety of spirit, the power of thought, the majesty of mind were all in arms for her. The peace-loving and luxurious Pasha, who had been long accustomed to her presence, and by no means insensible to her excelling beauty, bereft as he was of his fair wife, and threatened by an isolation of heart from which he would naturally shrink with a very pardonable selfishness in the first moment of his bereavement, would probably yield to the spell of her impassioned eloquence—and where would he then seek the victim ?

The head of the Aga Baba sank upon his breast, and his heart heaved. He could not put the answer prompted by his own reason into words.

With these reflections was he accompanied through the gallery of the harem, to the salem-lik ; and no brighter hope had suggested itself even when he stood before the veiled door of the Satrap's private apartment. How he wished at that moment that he had been a less privileged intruder, that thus a few more instants of delay might have been his, while the ceremonies of his introduction to the presence of the Pasha were

performed ; but, alas ! the wish was idle ; and with the eye of every loiterer in the anteroom upon him, he was compelled at once to lift the screen, to pass the portal, and to stand before his master.

CHAPTER XXVI.

“How now, Ashref;” said the Pasha, as the trembling Aga Baba bowed down before him ; “Ne istersiniz—what brings you here ? —Nay, by my father’s beard ! you tremble—you avoid my eye—Speak, wretch—what of my wife ? what of my harem ?”

In the energy of the moment, the Satrap had risen from the sofa ; and as he uttered the last eager question, he stood within a few paces of the shrinking slave.

“May my lord live to see the beard of his grandson white with years !” gasped out the Aga Baba ; “A wolf has stolen into the fold, or a lamb has strayed—Is not the world free for my lord the Pasha ? Are not all the beauties of the earth at his disposal ? Can he not——”

“Enough of this;” said the Satrap with a frightful calmness which was more appalling than the fiercest burst of passion; “Say your errand without metaphor or preface; words are idle; and I am in no humour to be fooled.”

The negro sank upon his knees; “Amān, amān — mercy, mercy — the lady Carimfil has fled ——”

Words have no power to paint the transport of the Pasha; the strength of half a dozen men seemed to have passed into his arm; he lifted the unresisting negro from the floor, and then hurled him back, with a fury that threatened the dislocation of every trembling limb; he spurned him as he grovelled in the dust; and his fingers clutched the hilt of his handjar, as though his vengeance almost overcame his prudence, and that he thirsted to destroy him with the remainder of his secret still unsaid. But the first moment of phrenzied anguish over, he mastered the overwhelming passion — he was sure of his victim; and he had yet much to learn. A flood of mingled memories pressed upon his brain; and when he again spoke, his voice was hollow and husky, like that of one whose lips have long been sealed.

The tale was soon told; nor did the Satrap

interrupt it by a word or a gesture, until the wily Ashref, in order to divert his vengeance into another channel, expatiated on the treachery of Katinka, who had not only favoured the flight of the lost beauty, but cunningly concealed it until pursuit was hopeless.

“ And she knew it ! The false Greek knew that she was to fly from me ! ” he then burst forth : “ May all her dastard nation be withered for her sake ! Was it for this that I suffered her dark shadow to rest beside the light of my eyes ; and her cunning words to conjure me into temporary forgetfulness of my own soul ?—But it is not yet too late for vengeance ! Follow me, false slave ! You shall not die alone if Saïfula Pasha lives to cross once more the threshold of his harem.”

As he spoke, the Pasha strode haughtily through the chamber, and passed out without casting a backward glance upon the fainting wretch who passively followed with death already in his heart.

When the Pasha reached the great hall, whence the apartments of the women opened right and left, he found it deserted. The affrighted slaves, anxious to escape the first outbreak of his vengeance, had hastily concealed

themselves on his approach ; but when he stood upon the threshold of the chamber where he had last beheld his lost Carimfil, he met the proud and unshrinking eye of the Greek girl who was standing in the centre of the floor.

A bitter and a threatful malediction rose to the lips of the Pasha ; but the calm, assured, and thrilling gaze of those deep wild eyes arrested it in the utterance ; and he had advanced a pace or two into the room in silence, when the low sweet voice of the maiden broke the spell.

“ Saïfula Pasha, the lord of a powerful province, is come to seek from the captured Kattinka tidings of his wife—” she said, in as undisturbed a tone as though she knew not that the soul of her listener shook with anguish, and that his heart bled from a fresh and gaping wound ; “ Let him rather ask the pampered slave who crouches close behind him, and to whom he had confided the safety of his harem, and his own honour ! The eye slumbered that should have watched—the ear was sealed that should have listened—the hand was nerveless for whose clasp the naked scymitar had been prepared—and while that traitor lives, the name of Saïfula Pasha will be a mark for scorn. What has the coward whispered to his master ? That

the Greek girl, who was purchased by his gold, cherished by his care, consoled in her bondage by his gentleness, had leagued with a false and unloving wife to stab him as he slept — Nay, Speak not, wretch !” she exclaimed haughtily, as the Aga Baba was about to make another desperate effort at self-preservation, while the Pasha remained thrallèd and overawed by an energy such as he had never before beheld : “ speak not, lest thy false tongue be torn from between thy lying lips, and flung to the dogs who would turn away revolted by such foul garbage—” and then, as though the interruption had failed to break the chain of her ideas, she continued — “ But did the dastard murmur to his lord that the exiled maiden who had eaten of his bread, and rested beneath his roof, spurned at the efforts that were made to lead her also to abandon her princely master ? Did he tell how she withstood the prayers and tears of the fugitive, and how she mocked at the assurance that she would be the victim of another’s crime, and become the sacrifice of her own devotion ? If he told this also, let him stand forth, and bear witness that his eye, his ear, and his arm were employed in the service of his lord : but if he knew nothing of the struggle between the lost one and her

early friend, then let him pay the price of his supineness."

"Mashallah!" murmured the bewildered Pasha, quivering with mingled rage, anguish, and admiration; "he is a false slave, and he shall die the death!"

"Away with him then at once!" continued the Greek girl; "his breath pollutes the chamber, and his vile body cumberes the earth." And without waiting the acquiescence of the Satrap, she clapped her hands, and two negroes instantly obeyed the summons.

A few brief words from the Pasha, who was startled into instant compliance with the unyielding will of the maiden; and whose weak nature was overwhelmed by the lava-flood of passion that poured from her quivering lips; decided the fate of the wretched Aga Baba, who was borne from the apartment, shrieking out his despair with all the shrill terror of a woman.

As the screen fell behind the executioners and their victim, Katinka flung herself wildly upon her knees before the Pasha; every trace of haughtiness had vanished from her brow — her eyes had lost their light, and trembled through a sea of tears; her head was bowed upon her heaving bosom, and she was all the woman.

“ Look on me, my lord ;” she whispered, as she clasped the hem of his robe with her small fair hands: “ look on me, and listen to me, ere you condemn me — I do not mean to death — I care not for it — I do not fear it — but to the hopeless anguish of your displeasure. Am I to blame that the lost one loved you not ? — that she had poured the sherbet of affection over the flowers of paradise before she entered your harem ? and that she nursed the memory of her first love until it grew into dishonour ?—Am I to blame ?” she continued in a yet fainter murmur, as the Pasha was about to interrupt her ; “ am I to blame that my heart clung where her’s had failed to find a resting-place ? that, yielding to a passion I had no longer the power to controul, I entered madly into a plot which was to ensure the absence of her who hid from me the sun of my existence ? I have done — *sen ektiar der* — you are the master ; I ask for no mercy save that which your heart may offer, by paying back the tenderness of mine.”

The astonished Pasha hesitated for a moment, during which he looked down upon the fair young creature before him. She was very beautiful, and Carimfil was gone: she loved him — for it never occurred to him to doubt the fact ;

and there is a charm in novelty which deepens loveliness a hundred fold: but Saïfula Pasha was a rigid Moslem, and the maiden was a Greek; and with characteristic stolidity, he replied to her passionate appeal by a stammering allusion to her apostacy.

The lip of the girl curled in scorn, but only for an instant; the stake on which she had perilled her life was not to be lightly lost; and rising from her knees, her dark eyes flashing once more with the intense light that seemed to burn into the soul, she exclaimed reproachfully: "And has Saïfula Pasha yet to learn that all is easy to those who love? Shall not his faith be mine? his will be my law? and his greatness my glory?"

"Inshallah!" said the Satrap, overcome by the energetic eloquence of his companion; "What can I say? I am alone, and my heart is heavy. How can I pass my days if my harem is desolate! Allah kerim! It shall be as you have said. I shall offer one soul to the Prophet — one convert to the true faith. Bèyaz, I will forget the falsehood of which I have been the victim — severim sèni — I love you — but — you must cease to be a Giaour."

"Allah il Allah. Mahomet resoul Allah!"

said Katinka in a firm voice, and without the hesitation of a second ; “ when the Imāum claims me, I am ready.”

“ St. Estafania be my witness ;” murmured the girl to herself, as the Pasha shortly afterwards left the harem : “ I will hang the chains that have so long pressed down my own spirit upon the soul of that coward-hearted despot, or the blood that was spilt at Scio shall be on my head ! Love ! ’tis a madman’s dream — but power, wealth, and a proud name, are the tripod on which true happiness is based — I have toiled for it — humbled my haughty spirit to obtain it — bent my neck to the oppressive yoke, and my lip to the ready lie — and these are my wages —” and she laughed bitterly as she flung back the lid of an inlaid casket in which were contained the costly jewels that the Circassian had abandoned in her flight. “ These — and the selfish passion of the Moslem !”

THE END.

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